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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Southampton Education School

**A Cross-Case Analysis of ESD Learning and Development in UK Business Schools**

by

**Angelika Salmen**

June 2018



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## **ABSTRACT**

FACULTY SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Education

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

### **A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF ESD LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN UK BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

Angelika Salmen

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has found its way onto business school agendas with an increase in curricular engagement. With a large number of students obtaining business and management degrees, business schools are at the forefront of educating future business leaders, hence are in the spotlight of sustainability and responsibility debates. Academics are crucial in ESD research and teaching, yet their learning and development is still largely confined to the side-lines in academic debates, which is paradoxical given their role in educating future business leaders. This thesis investigates academics' learning of ESD and their perceptions on professional development opportunities as a means to support curricular integration. A cross-case analysis of three UK business schools highlights similar barriers and drivers across universities, and shows that enthusiasts remain at the forefront of ESD integration, a process influenced by each institutional setting. Additionally, there is a fragmentation on how academics learn and develop their knowledge and skills and ESD learning. Other findings point to the marketisation of HE and changing academic role that constitutes a higher degree of pressure and additional responsibilities. Ultimately, ESD learning and integration are impacted through individuals' lack of time to engage, a lack of funding and support and shifting priorities in research that is more likely to further their careers. The implications of this study are twofold, firstly suggesting that academics' ESD development requires individuals, both enthusiasts and non-enthusiasts, to embrace other forms of learning such as social learning in order to increase collaborations across University departments and disciplines. This in turn ties in to ongoing institutional support for enthusiasts to pursue sustainability activities. Secondly, the changing role of academics has to be taken into consideration to contribute to a more realistic and systemic integration of ESD, by firmly prioritising the concept as part of institutions blue prints.



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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, ..... [please print name]

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

[title of thesis] .....

.....  
I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before:

Signed: .....

Date: .....



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## Definitions and Abbreviations

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACBSP	Accreditation Council for Business Schools & Programs
AMBA	Association of MBAs
BAM	British Academy of Management
CIPD	The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DESD	Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
EAC	Environmental Audit Committee
EAUC	Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges
EE	Environmental Education
EFMD	European Foundation for Management Education
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESDGC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
EUA	European University Association
GAP	Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development
HE	Higher Education
HE21	Higher Education for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEI/s	Higher Education Institution/s
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ILA	International Leadership Association
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LSC	Learning Skills Council
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NUS	National Union of Students
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfS	Office for Students
PD	Professional Development
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QE	Quality Enhancements
SD	Sustainable Development
SDC	Sustainable Development Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAD	Sustainability Education Academic Development
SEDA	Staff and Education Development Association
UBC	University of British Columbia
UCCfS	Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland
UE4SD	University Educators for Sustainable Development
UKPSA	UK Professional Standards Framework
ULSF	University Leaders for a Sustainable Future
UN	United Nations

UNCDE	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNPRME	United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education
UUK	Universities UK
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development



# Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Background and Rationale

In the midst of business scandals, socio-economic issues, environmental challenges, and the depletion of resources, Sustainable Development (SD) defined as the “development that meets the needs of the current generation without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” has grown to prominence over the past few decades (WCED, 1987: 41). Two of the first events that internationally acknowledged the issues the world is facing, were the United Nations Conference on Development and Environment (UNCED) and their publishing of the Brundtland Report, as well as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Many country leaders pledged their commitment, responsibilities and financial concessions to support less developed countries in tackling climate change. The Summit ratified the ‘Rio Declaration on Environment’ and ‘Agenda 21’, followed by subsequent commitments in form of the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) in the new millennium. In 2015 these goals were conceded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals and 169 targets to further tackling global issues (United Nations, n.d.). Even though the declarations and more specific actions have proven challenging, the consensus on the importance of SD has grown, and nearly all countries in the world have signed the so-called ‘Paris Agreement’, ratified at the Sustainable Innovation Forum, the successor of previous climate change events, in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

The importance of education in supporting the established goals was acknowledged early on in the Rio Summit (UN, 1992a) and the MDGs (United Nations, 2000). The SDGs commit to education through their fourth goal on ‘Quality Education’ by aiming to equip individuals by 2030 with the knowledge to contribute to the principles of SD as set out in target 4.7, as well as widening access to Higher Education (HE) scholarships (United Nations, 2015). Over the years, a number of declarations have been published and signed by Universities across the globe, pledging their support to SD (see Appendix A). One can argue about the effectiveness of both events over the years and any changes initiated or goals reached. Nevertheless, the message that the current and

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<sup>1</sup> As of March 2018, the Paris Agreement was signed by 195 countries and ratified by 175. The agreement has also seen the United States of America back down on their commitment, with the intention to withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Further details are available at the UN Climate Change website [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php).

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ever declining state of the Earth is man-made, can be said to have reached the mainstream of societies across the world, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)<sup>2</sup>.

Universities have undergone major changes in the past few decades. With a record number of students entering Higher Education (HESA, 2019)<sup>3</sup>, the mission and responsibility of Universities in educating future political and business leaders has become a central debate (see Bell *et al.*, 2009; Gough and Scott, 2007; Orr, 2004). This debate has further been strengthened in light of the recent economic downturn and high profile business failures, caused by company leaders that have been educated at some of the most prestigious business schools in the world (Giacalone and Wargo, 2009). Considering that business and management degrees are now favoured over other areas of study (HESA, 2017) and are raising the income of Universities profoundly (Starkey *et al.*, 2004), the impact that business education can have on a large number of students, and ultimately business and society leaders, needs to be reconsidered. As some claim (Ghoshal, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005), teaching old business and economics theories is outdated and fuels the irresponsible behaviour of future business leaders, who are merely seeking to make profits. Given the potential impact of business education outlined above, this thesis will focus on SD within business schools in the UK.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) also defined as “a learning process (or approach to teaching) based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability and is concerned with all types of education” (UNESCO, 2009: 26) has moved onto the agendas of many UK HEIs and in particular business and management schools<sup>4</sup>. Research and publications in this area have increased, and various organisations and groups have been established to work towards integrating more responsible business and management education or support initiatives to do so. Advance HE<sup>5</sup>, the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), and the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (UN PRME) are just a few examples of an increased commitment to further more responsible education within business schools, and HE in general. A good starting point for business schools to integrate SD into curricula is the PRME

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<sup>2</sup> This is particularly evident in the large number of signatories to the ‘Paris Agreement’, University leaders pledging their support for SD through various declarations like the ‘Talloires Declaration’ (see Appendix A & Appendix B) and various initiatives such as the ‘Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges’ (EAUC) or the ‘UN Principles for Responsible Management Education’ (PRME).

<sup>3</sup> Student enrolment in UK universities has increased considerably (see Bolton, 2012). For example in the academic year of 1994/95, 1,567,313 students were enrolled in UK HEIs (HESA, 1996), whereas in 2017/18 the total stands at 2,343,095. Further information and statistics documenting these changes are available at [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk).

<sup>4</sup> Here forth referred to as Business Schools

<sup>5</sup> Previously known as the Higher Education Academy (HEA)

principles, which have seen an increased number of signatories since their inception (UNPRME, 2017).

Although there is a considerable increase in initiatives fostering ESD, its integration is still rather patchy across curricula and mainly focuses on green issues and operations, rather than strategy and curricular activities (Tilbury, 2011). The questions arise, what slows ESD down, and what can be done to drive its implementation within HE curricula, specifically in business schools? Various drivers and barriers to ESD integration have been identified in academic publications, but these need to be considered in the context of the history of HE, and the sectors' relationship with change.

While HE has undergone some considerable changes over the past decades, it is not only known for being rather slow in adapting to change but also resisting it (Weber, 2012). The reasons can be found in long standing University traditions, the variety in disciplines and cultures within institutions and their priorities and links to SD (Lozano, 2006; Weber and Hirsch, 2002), but also complex governance structures and internal politics. According to Tilbury (2011) the implementation of SD into HE institutions requires more systemic change and should be treated as a process rather than having a beginning and an end.

Governmental policies and declarations within all countries of the UK for example, are, like ESD itself, patchy, with an overall national governmental ESD strategy missing and posing one of the biggest barriers in its integration, fuelled by a lack of understanding the concept and its importance (Martin *et al.*, 2013). Quality Assurance (QA) is another barrier seen as vital.

Supported by Advance HE, its 'UK Quality Code for Higher Education' aims to raise quality in teaching and learning, an important aspect in integrating ESD into HE curricula. Quality and ESD are also important in terms of accreditation purposes to provide a standard across institutions (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). However, the new QA Quality Code lacks addressing ESD further. An inherent issue across QA staff is also the lack of knowledge on SD and its importance.

The landscape in UK HE has changed, with an increased marketisation of Universities, a sharp increase in tuition fees and debates about students as consumers (Guilbault, 2018; Molesworth *et al.*, 2009; Nixon *et al.*, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). Students are now shaping their learning experience and their role is becoming more important in pushing the HE agenda towards not only a better study experience, but an understanding of the role that they have in the sustainability debate. A recent survey of undergraduate students by Advance HE has seen a positive attitude and interest towards SD, and emphasises the importance that students play in pushing the agenda forward (Drayson *et al.*, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015). However, the studies also show a

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considerable lack of understanding the concept of SD and its relation to students' learning experience (*ibid*).

The institutional strategy of a University and the tone set from the top can also impact on the long-term implementation of ESD, as a bottom-up approach alone will not create a lasting transformation of institutions' strategies towards a more responsible practice (Bekessy *et al.*, 2003). Leadership, perseverance and a long-term view that leave room for flexibility and adaption to complex situations are significant factors in an institution's change strategy (Sharp, 2002; Tilbury, 2011). Incorporating ESD is a mammoth task that needs time to meet with approval of most stakeholders and gather the supporters of a very wide and varied landscape of departments, schools, and faculties. University leaders are in a favourable position to influence or drive a change processes. This refers not exclusively, but also to the provision of financial resources that, if not available, often hinder Universities to engage with current global and societal issues (Bok, 2010; Hopkins and McKeown, 2005; Thomas, 2004). Furthermore, a focus should be put on fostering a University culture that embraces ESD and SD in general, as a more favourable culture can facilitate the integration of these changes (Hayles and Holdsworth, 2008; Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018)

All factors influencing ESD integration can be seen as both barriers and drivers. Academics with an interest in SD and related areas are seen as one of the biggest barriers; but also one of the most impactful drivers in ESD integration within HE institutions (see Barth and Rieckmann, 2012; Moon and Orlitzky, 2011; Warren and Tweedale, 2002). Good practice within HE, and business schools in particular, often stems from individual academics or small groups who champion ESD across their department or institution. However, these groups or individuals also face considerable challenges that can be narrowed down to a low interest in ESD, either from a lack of knowledge or misconception of the topic, or the shifting priority to research paths that support a more stable research career. Other issues relate to understanding of how SD relates to academics' interests, research, their teaching, and the absence of resources including funding, time and support, to pursue ESD integration on top of already existing responsibilities. Where SD modules and courses are taught, there is also concern of the lack of experience and knowledge of educators to teach those subjects such as business ethics properly (Acevedo, 2012). Another issue is the still existing silo mentality of disciplines and departments, by working strictly within their field of research (Roberts and Roberts, 2008). All challenges are intrinsically linked and have to be taken into consideration in order to achieve a systemic change across business schools and HEI.

ESD integration still largely relies on key staff or champions/enthusiasts, which creates challenges as a loss of these individuals can jeopardise any initiatives started (Brammer *et al.*, 2012).

Engaging more staff and providing the necessary support for existing ESD champions is necessary to prevent the loss of dedicated academics. Turning gatekeepers, whether academic or support staff who are either not interested in, or aware of SD, into supporters requires utilising the initiative of existing advocates and the further development of academics in the field of sustainability (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013), as well as their support in order to avoid demotivation and isolation of engaged staff (Down, 2006).

Making individuals a part of the transformation, can turn gatekeepers into followers by giving them the chance to drive the change process (Fiselier *et al.*, 2018; House and Watson, 1995). This can be done by developing their knowledge and skillset in order to become more confident to engage in SD activities, which is a crucial step in integrating ESD in HE curricula (Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008). Whether, this leads to a higher number of engaged individuals and successful outcomes in implementing ESD is not guaranteed, given the complexities of change processes and their changing dynamics (Dawson, 2003b).

Although individuals are frequently mentioned in publications as an important factor of ESD integration, as it is individuals who often drive initiatives (Littledyke *et al.*, 2013; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013), there is a lack of research on further exploring how academics' potentials can be utilised to drive the SD agenda (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012). In addition, not much is known about how academics acquire the relevant knowledge, or how business schools and Universities as a whole, support and train their staff to pass this knowledge on to students (Roberts and Roberts, 2008). There is research however, that suggests that a lack of learning and development is perceived as a significant barrier in embedding ESD into HE curricula (Cant and Kulik, 2009). Overall, there appears to be a lack of understanding of SD, and related terminology, as a concept across the board, including students, academics, and policymakers (see sections 2.2.3 & 2.4).

At the heart of every change process is one crucial aspect, learning (Senge, 2006), more specifically social learning (Kates *et al.*, 2001) which incorporates all actors in the change process and embraces differences (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012). However, academics' learning tends to be informal in nature and is often disconnected from formal professional development in HE. The learning and development of academics is highly fragmented and raises questions on differences of academic versus the development of other staff, for instance support staff, loyalty towards disciplines and institutions as well as informal learning, which constitutes the main aspect of learning for academic staff (Clegg, 2003b). With various changes in UK HE that have taken place over the past few decades and differences between new and traditional Universities, professional development has evolved differently across institutions.

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Although there is a continuous emphasis on individual academics and their potential influence, but also drive to implement ESD best practice, efforts are fragmented across HEIs to implement SD more effectively into curricula and beyond. While it is important to talk about student engagement with SD, it might be even more important to explore academics who are researching and teaching ESD related subjects, and how to harness their expertise and best practice to drive more responsible business and management education forward. There is a widespread lack of research concerning academics' learning and development of ESD, which is paradox given that these individuals are teaching future graduates and business leaders. It is also not clear what measures schools and institutions take to support and engage them and others respectively, to broaden their skillset, in order to contribute to ESD integration. Enhancing our knowledge of academics' learning and the debates surrounding learning and development in HE can broaden our understanding of how to collaboratively, through social learning, pursue ESD integration within a systemic change process.

With ever increasing socio-economic and environmental issues, coupled with expectations of HEIs to contribute to the solution of the world's issues, ESD can be seen as a way forward to educate future leaders. Nevertheless, some key questions prevail such as, who is educating the educator, and how do academics learn and develop their SD knowledge and skillset at business schools in the UK?

### 1.2 Aim of Research

Academics take on an important role in educating university students. With an increase in students undertaking business and management degrees, the impact academics have on raising students' awareness of global issues, and providing them with the tools to critically address and reflect on these problems, can potentially lead graduates to making more responsible decisions in the future.

Research addresses academics' importance and highlights training and professional development as a way to foster academic engagement with SD (Holdsworth and Thomas, 2015; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Scott, 1999). While debates acknowledge academics' role in supporting ESD integration, they fall short of addressing academics' learning and its contribution to the debate. In particular, this relates to social learning and how individuals and groups from different parts of HEIs can come together to learn with and from each other. Debates on ESD learning and development of academics and the provision of such opportunities have so far only scratched the surface, by mainly emphasising the importance to learn about SD or case studies that are presenting

examples of best practice. While some universities show efforts to provide learning and development opportunities such as the University of Gloucestershire, there is an absence of widening these programmes and more fundamental support in mainstreaming successes and mobilising individual ESD champions or groups. What appears to be missing is a wider discussion of how academics learn more generally, which tends to differ from other professions. Thus, providing a more comprehensive picture of how academics' learning can contribute to ESD integration within their institution, but also in teaching students.

My doctoral thesis will address these issues more closely by looking at various business schools and their efforts in promoting and integrating SD and ESD in particular, whether operationally, through research and teaching. Comparing initiatives of business schools and their respective universities, by highlighting commonalities and differences, will help to frame ESD in different HE settings. Furthermore, any variances will help to provide a backdrop to how business schools support academics to integrate ESD and what learning and development initiatives are provided to support ESD integration.

Academics are central to my thesis as these individuals are teaching the next generation of graduates and future business leaders. Their engagement with sustainability related issues could make a profound difference in educating graduates, knowledge creation through collaborations and research or even hinder its integration. However, given the complexities of concepts like SD and ESD and the intricacies of current global issues, as well as widespread changes in academia, it is important to focus on those key individuals who could drive the sustainability agenda in HEIs. Therefore, my thesis will look at academics who are engaged in sustainability activities within their institutions and analyse who these key persons are and what role they play in ESD integration, by also considering their background that might have influenced their attitude and engagement with SD. Furthermore, the thesis investigates how academics learn about sustainability, how they respond to more formal ESD learning opportunities and what their institutions undertake to support their learning.

The above provides the contextual background to analyse each case study, institutional positions and actions related to SD, academics' learning and more importantly, academics' perception on their own ESD learning. Thus, highlighting complexities within learning and development of academics in general, as well as in conjunction with SD and ESD respectively. This doctoral thesis therefore, aims to analyse the perception of academics towards ESD integration, through learning and development opportunities and the support provided by their institutions. Findings will contribute to further understanding academic learning and its utilisation to improve ESD activities across universities. Furthermore, outcomes can aid understanding of the relationship between

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the professional role of academics and learning and development, compared to other professions.

The following research questions guide the research process and are answered to fulfil the research aim.

1. What are UK Business Schools doing to integrate ESD into the curriculum, and what roles do individual academics play?
2. How do academics perceive the support given by their school/University to integrate ESD into research and teaching, and what is their perception on learning and development?
3. How are UK Business Schools contributing to ESD learning and development of academic staff?
4. What hinders the provision of formal ESD learning and development opportunities and how does this impact ESD integration?

In order to answer the above research questions, three UK business schools were closely analysed, by conducting a total of 16 semi-structured interviews with academics, and support staff involved in SD research, teaching, or operational tasks. In addition, strategic documents, reports and website content were analysed that corroborated the interviews. The thesis presents an overview of SD and ESD, including best practice and challenges within each business school, to set the background to each case. It then highlights individuals' stories of researching, teaching and promoting SD, as well as learning and development opportunities, provided to broaden their skillset and engage others.

### **1.3 Research Contribution**

This doctoral thesis contributes to existing research on ESD and its integration into business schools and HE respectively. It specifically looks at an area that has received a lack of attention in academic research, the engagement of academics with SD, and their individual learning and development to foster ESD implementation and encourage others to engage with the topic. While research on the learning and development of academics in relation to ESD has increased, the academic output is still relatively low and research does not address inherent issues of professional development in academia and the challenges it presents to SD.

By focusing on case study research, different institutions and their SD strategies and best practice are identified, in order to support other institutions that are tackling similar issues. The cross-case analysis aspect, also allows the comparison between different institutions and highlights

experiences and perceptions of academics who are researching and teaching SD related subjects within their institutions relating to learning and development. The outcomes further contribute to learning and development in connection with SD, which in turn can open new avenues in approaching ESD integration, as well as raising awareness of the learning and development component in SD within HE. In addition to research and ESD practice, the thesis has and still is in many ways contributing to my personal development as a doctoral researcher, including the deepening of my knowledge within the area of SD and ESD respectively.

Finally, the thesis aims to encourage further research in this area, to explore good practice, and raise staff interest to engage with SD, business ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the many other areas under the umbrella of ESD.

## 1.4 Summary of Chapters

The following section outlines the structure of the thesis and provides an overview of the chapters. Chapter 2 analyses publications on the current discourse of SD in the context of HE. It particularly focuses on the importance of education in SD and the focus placed on business schools to integrate ESD across curricula, including similar concepts like responsible management, CSR, business ethics and others. Moreover, it emphasises the barriers and drivers of ESD and the challenges HE faces in implementing more responsible business education from a change management perspective. The chapter then highlights systemic change as a suitable way forward to address large-scale transformations across HEIs, and the importance of individual academics and learning to drive change forward. In particular, learning and development and social learning of academics is discussed in more detail, by also exploring the professional development nexus across HEI.

Chapter 3 lays out the methodology and research methods used to collect empirical data. It highlights the underlying philosophy of constructivism that guides the research questions, and expands on the reasoning to conduct multiple case study research, the use of semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The chapter further points out aspects concerning ethical and quality issues, in undertaking the chosen research method and design.

Chapter 4 continues, by presenting the key findings from the data collection stage, incorporating interviews and document analyses from all three UK case studies. Each case study is analysed individually through a within-case analysis and provides the context and background of each

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institution and their engagement with ESD. Chapter 5 follows on with a cross-case analysis of the three case studies, by identifying commonalities and differences across the business schools.

Chapter 6 then discusses the key empirical findings in relation to previous research on SD and ESD in business schools, and HE in general. In addition, the research questions are answered and further assumptions presented. The final Chapter 7 goes on to conclude the analysis of the research findings, discuss the contribution to knowledge of this thesis, and offer recommendations for future research in this area.

## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews past and present academic literature on the discourse of Sustainable Development and its relation to and importance for integration into Higher Education. It provides a background and current debates in the field, in order to set the framework for the empirical research undertaken.

Section 2.2 sets the scene with a background into the historical developments of SD, and highlights key debates, and conceptual issues. In addition, the link of, and importance to, education is discussed, more specifically HEIs and their role in the sustainability debate and the current socio-economic climate. Section 2.3 looks more closely at ESD and other related concepts, how these relate to business schools by also pointing out the mission, role, and current developments within business education. Furthermore, this section outlines changes that have taken place in UK HEIs over the past few decades and have shaped business education.

Section 2.4 then looks at common factors that hinder and drivers that push ESD integration in Universities, including legislation, quality assurance, students, leadership and culture. Some of the main barriers and drivers, individual academics, who act as champions or change agents within their institutions, are further identified. However, their importance within ESD integration lacks acknowledgement in the literature, and appears to be undervalued. These individuals are vital players in ESD integration, and need a greater focus if their position is to be utilised in the ESD agenda.

The next section 2.5 focuses on change within HE, and the complexities associated with transformations in the higher education sector. Systemic change is identified as a realistic option to integrate SD into Universities, and the concepts of learning, learning organisations and social learning are emphasised. Given the importance of individual academics, it is necessary to understand their roles, responsibilities, and contributions within their institutions. Furthermore, it is important to discuss how learning and development of academics takes place, and how this can contribute to ESD integration. The contested nature of learning and development in HE is then reviewed in section 2.6, by taking into account the many changes within the sector in the past few decades, and highlighting the importance that professional development and learning have for academics who research and teach ESD related subjects.

## 2.2 Sustainable Development: The Emergence of a Concept

### 2.2.1 A very Brief History of Sustainable Development

“We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost’s familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road – ‘the one less traveled by’ – offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that ensures the preservation of our earth” (Carson, 1963: 26).

More than 50 years on from the publishing of Rachel Carson’s book ‘Silent Spring’, the world has seen a rise in economic development, better living standards and ground-breaking technological and scientific innovations. On the downside, environmental problems and the diminishing of natural resources, the dramatic increase of the world’s population, the widening gap between rich and poor, economic inequalities and high profile business failures, these are all issues that have accompanied us for several decades, issues that many of us have grown up with. In the midst of these challenges Sustainable Development arises as a way out of global issues the world is facing. In the words of Schmand (2000: 4) “global change and Sustainable Development are this generation’s challenge and response”.

Acting responsibly towards the environment and ethical business decisions are not a new way of thinking. While SD is a concept that only recently emerged, the origins of the term ‘sustainability’ can be traced back even further<sup>6</sup>. Du Pisani (2006: 91) points to the ecological use of the word that “refer[s] to a state or condition that can be maintained over an indefinite period of time”. So, in its broadest sense, sustainability relates to preserving natural resources for a continued future use (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). Others like Simon *et al.* (2013), go further by including

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<sup>6</sup> Sustainability developed out of the notion not to overuse the land and resources provided, but ensure a continuity for future use. The term sustainability is said to have been coined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and its first recorded use ‘Nachhaltigkeit’ (German for sustainability) appeared in forestry literature in Germany, but similar terms can be found in other languages and countries. While the first use of the term appears around this time, mankind undoubtedly has always been in conflict with responsibly using versus overusing natural resources (Roberts and Roberts, 2008). A more detailed account of the history of SD can be found in various publications (see Du Pisani, 2006; Waas *et al.*, 2011)

environmental and economic aspects into their definition (see section 2.2.2), which resembles more of a definition of SD. However, while sustainability and SD are often used interchangeably, as appears to be the case with Simon *et al.* (2013), both concepts have developed differently and at different times. As mentioned above sustainability has its roots in ecology and nature preservation, while SD also incorporates economic and social aspects closely interlinked with environmental considerations.

The concept of SD has evolved from the early 1970s onwards with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), and concerns on environmental degradation and pollution. The term itself first appeared in the World Conservation Strategy of the World Conservation Union (IUCN, 1980). The IUCN (1980: 2) defines development as the “modification of the biosphere and the application of human, financial living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life”. The report further suggests the importance of all three economic, social and environmental aspects, alongside a long-term perspective for development to be sustainable (IUCN, 1980).

To date, a wealth of SD definitions have emerged such as that of Gillis and Vincent (2000: 11) who define SD as “development that maximizes the long-term net benefits to humankind, taking into account the costs of environmental degradation”, with net benefits referring to both economic gains and sustainable living conditions. This definition resembles that of the WCED presented below by incorporating the human or social, and environmental aspect. Rather than referring to economic gains Gillis and Vincent’s definition talks about ‘benefits’, including economic factors and sustainable living conditions. However, the broad nature, and sheer number<sup>7</sup>, of definitions and conceptual flaws of interpretation and practical application have led to widespread debates and criticism of SD, as discussed in the next section.

The probably most famous and often used definition of Sustainable Development is that of the World Commission on Environment and Development stating that SD is the “development that meets the needs of current generations without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 41). While sustainability had a wider focus on environmental issues, the emergence of SD widened the scope to equally comprise societal and economic issues (Weber, 2012), by also recognising the complexities of all three areas and their close interconnection. With the publishing of the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) and the United

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<sup>7</sup> Post the 1992 Rio Summit it was found that more than 70 definitions of SD existed alone (Holmberg, 1992), a number that has increased over the years.

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Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the international agreements the ‘Rio Declaration on Environment’ and ‘Agenda 21’ (UN, 1992b), SD has been publicly acknowledged as an integral issue and has made its way globally onto political agendas.

Further milestones were the MDGs, initially focusing on achieving eight development goals within some of the poorest countries until 2015, which were later conceded by the 17 SDGs (United Nations, n.d.). The SDGs are universal, targeting all countries, and provide a set of 169 targets that are more comprehensive in order to put SD into action, including ‘goal four’ on quality education (United Nations, n.d.), the theme most relevant to my thesis. These goals are however, not legally binding and require each country to translate the SDGs into further policies, laws and specific country contexts.

### **2.2.2 Critical Debates on Sustainable Development**

Since its inception, SD has come a long way, but has also caused a flurry of debates as it means different things to different people. Furthermore, SD has been used in many areas and organisational contexts and has been interpreted in varying ways not least by business, academics and governments (Redclift, 2005). Critics point to the contradiction of the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘development’, ask what development actually means and whether the term relates to improving social aspects such as education and health or merely relates to economic growth (Dresner, 2012; Redclift, 2005). If development is understood to mean economic growth and gains, it is no surprise that there are perceived contradictions between both words. Thus, as highlighted by the Brandt Commission “[One] must avoid the persistent confusion of growth with development, and we strongly emphasize that the prime objective of development is to lead to self-fulfilment and creative partnership in the use of nation’s productive forces and its full human potential” (The Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980: 23). Questions are also raised as to what it is that needs to be sustained, whether it is nature, society (Tovey, 2009) or our current way of life.

Further issues are the inclusion of societal and economic aspects to the definition of SD, which is said to confuse the originally intended meaning of the concept to preserve natural resources, and diverts attention from the environmental argument (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). In turn, some academics point to the muddled use and understanding of terms like Sustainable Development, sustainability and sustainable that still cause confusions to whether they all share

the same meaning, or are inherently different (Dresner, 2012; Waas *et al.*, 2011)<sup>8</sup>. Others highlight differences between a perception of strong sustainability, supported by more radical and activist individuals and groups, and weak sustainability favoured by liberal advocates (Huckle and Sterling, 1996). With a wealth of, and no overall agreed upon definition, the above issues continue to complicate conceptual debates and operationalisation of the concept (Leal-Filho, 2000; Redclift, 2005; Redclift and Springett, 2015).

The WCED definition (see section 2.2.1) has added to the debates due to the concepts far-reaching and simple approach (Dresner, 2012), which is also described as “deceptive and obscures underlying complexities and contradictions” by Redclift (2005: 213). These views resemble the concerns of (Corcoran and Wals, 2004a: 88) who point to sustainability as an “ill-defined” concept considering the many stakeholders and interests present in the debate, as well as a lack of practical application (Wals and Jickling, 2002). However, a strength of sustainability is that it can be interpreted and translated into different cultural and organisational contexts (Corcoran and Wals, 2004b), including HEIs. The vagueness of the definition is also evident as to the ‘needs’ that are to be sustained. Redclift and Springett (2015) point out that the term ‘needs’ as used in the definition still lacks clarity, considering that needs change, tend to differ across cultures, how they are influenced by development and that we cannot predict the needs of future generations.

Interestingly, the second and less used part of the definition provides a more detailed and focused idea of what SD attempts to achieve, but is rarely used in these debates (Waas *et al.*, 2011). The WCED further states that

“in essence, Sustainable Development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (WCED, 1987: 43).

In the end, the concept is not “such a vague idea as it is sometimes accused of being”, however putting it into practice is still an issue (Dresner, 2012: 73). The practical application can however be seen to be supported through the established SDGs and their specific targets within each goal, the Paris Agreement and its subsequent ratification by many of its signatories.

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<sup>8</sup> Sustainability and Sustainable Development terminology used by researchers and meanings associated with them, as well as critical debates on SD have been covered extensively in various publications (see Dresner, 2012; Lele, 1991; Redclift, 2005; Redclift and Springett, 2015; Waas *et al.*, 2011).

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Although still broad in nature, the SD definition is a starting point to tackle the issues humanity is facing. Its fuzziness is not surprising though, as viewpoints on the implementation of SD vary greatly between countries (Schmand, 2000). Differences originate from individual cultures, their history and relationship to the natural environment and resources. Interpretations and national contexts can therefore complicate understanding the concept, something that presents an even greater challenge to align SD and put it into practice. As such, variances need to be taken into consideration in order to better understand the concept, its many aspects and influences in order to effect changes. After all, sustainability has developed across the world in different ways and different foci, on local and cultural contexts. Moreover, it is argued that the SD debate has largely been dominated and driven by affluent countries in the North that have contributed to the socio-economic and environmental problems and that the concept has become politicised (see Huckle, 1996; Kirby *et al.*, 1995; Mebratu, 1998; Redclift and Springett, 2015).

The contested meaning of the concept has been, and is to date still causing debates among researchers, politicians, businesses and many other stakeholders. The vagueness raises questions about how to exactly reach SD and what it entails to get there, but also if development can be sustainable at all or that both words rather contradict (Reid, 1995). However, it is suggested that an overall agreed upon definition would miss the point of SD (Dresner, 2012), or might not even be attainable due to so many different inputs, opinions, stakeholders involved in the debate and the risk of always excluding views (Bell and Morse, 2008; Robinson, 2004). But it is exactly this flexibility and mouldability that allows the concept to further evolve, within an already complex and interconnected world that requires the input of many stakeholders (Kates *et al.*, 2005). Hence, why it can be “best understood as ‘a dialogue of values’ – a way of encouraging people to learn, to discover and to evaluate” (Blewitt, 2018).

Although the questions remain and differences on the understanding of the concept will always be present, an interesting perspective is that of a comparison to terms such as liberty or justice, which in themselves do not have an overall agreed upon meaning and depend on different backgrounds and cultural understandings too (Huckle, 1996). In the words of the Dutch scientist de Vries (1989), “sustainability is not something to be defined, but to be declared. It is an ethical guiding principle” (in Peet, 1992: 209) and therefore, is dependent on well-rounded and critical individuals who question the status quo and the world around them. SD as such might be a concept that has no beginning or end, but can be understood as a process that embraces social learning and the societal struggles inherent in a contested concept like SD (Tovey, 2009). Thus, requires continuous contribution of the worlds’ societies if global issues are to be tackled.

My thesis is guided by the definition put forward by Simon *et al.* (2013: 3) who state that sustainability is “ideas and operations necessary to ensure the continuation of a healthy natural environment; this includes the societies and economic activity reliant upon that environment, and the resources, services, and aesthetics it provides”. With the social and economic aspects in mind Sustainable Development then becomes the vehicle to achieving this process. Furthermore, I believe that sustainability is not something that can be achieved without consideration of socio-economic factors, and a wider discussion of the many shapes and forms that development can assume. Therefore, the WCED definition of SD is further used, embracing the open and flexible meaning of the concept that considers socio-economic differences, in order to accomplish the above, by widening the idea of development to include the many forms of human development. I will be using both terms interchangeably, to signify a process rather than an end goal to achieving a more just and equitable relationship of humankind and the natural environment.

### **2.2.3 Sustainable Development Policies and Declarations**

Even before the term SD was coined education was recognised as a means to address environmental issues, and was already promoted as a vehicle for change in various conferences such as the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (UNEP, 1972), the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO, 1975) and the Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO and UNEP, 1977) (see Huckle and Sterling, 1996; Reid, 1995). The importance of education in the realm of the concept of SD, by not just focusing on ecological factors but also economic and social issues, was first however globally acknowledged at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (UN, 1992b). Initiatives continued with the establishment of the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) that focused on lifting developing countries out of poverty (United Nations, 2000). The MDGs were later superseded by the ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs) that widened the focus and now address all nations, by additionally recognising the importance of climate change to tackle world issues and setting more specific goals and objectives in meeting these targets, one of which is highlighted in the fourth goal of ‘Quality Education’ (United Nations, n.d.).

Over the years various other more HE specific declarations were published and events were held that put Universities at the forefront of supporting SD (see Appendix A). One of the major concessions of HEIs declaring their support to own up to their SD responsibilities is the Talloires Declaration, which was initially signed by 22 University leaders from various countries at a conference in Talloires France (ULSF, 1990b). The signatories of the Talloires Declaration acknowledge the stake and influence HEIs have in our societies, by emphasising the importance of

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collaborating with stakeholders, educating responsible citizens and promoting interdisciplinary collaborations, in order to work towards a sustainably just future (ULSF, 1990a).

Up to January 2014 the number of signatories had increased to 466 University leaders to affirm their engagement with SD (ULSF, 2014). As of February 2018, the number has increased to 503 institutions worldwide, with 13 UK signatories of which 11 are Universities, one is a college for further education and one non-education organisation (ULSF, 2018). Further agreements engaging HEIs followed well beyond the Millennium such as the Lüneburg Declaration (UNESCO, 2001) among others, as shown in Appendix A (see Tilbury, 2011). The number of signatories for the Talloires Declaration has increased from its inception. Nevertheless, the current total of supporters appears quite small considering that there are several thousand Universities around the world. Comparing the different declarations and Universities' involvement globally shows that there is more to be done for HEIs to pledge their support to SD, but to transform promises into firm actions.

Throughout the growth stages of Sustainable Development a number of declarations, including the above, (ULSF, 1990b; UNESCO, 2001; UNPRME, 2013a) have been published in order to gain momentum and push the sustainability agenda forward, by engaging various stakeholders across the globe. An organisation that has greatly contributed to SD and the SDGs is the 'Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative' (GRLI) that brings together various stakeholders from business schools, business and other organisations to promote and support responsible leadership, new ways of learning and systems thinking (GRLI, 2017). The GRLI has been instrumental in developing and contributing to the UN PRME, as well as establishing partnerships with the accreditation associations the 'European Foundation for Management Development' (EFMD) and the 'Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business' (AACSB) (GRLI, 2017). Other initiatives such as the 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development' (DESD), the 'Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development' (GAP), the follow up to the DESD, launched to stimulate the engagement with sustainability and education and promote the collaboration among HEIs.

Principles of declarations and agreements tend to be broad in nature and provide HEIs often with broad guidelines only, to implement sustainability in their curricula. The six PRME principles for example focus more on general goals such as the teaching of sustainability related concepts, undertaking relevant research, ingraining them in the daily activities and curricula and developing the necessary materials, without providing Universities with more concrete measures to achieve these goals (see UNPRME, 2013a). Universities have to translate the general guidelines into actions relating to their own needs, act on their own initiatives and provide "institutional

strengthening and professional development in order for their principles to be translated into practice" (Tilbury *et al.*, 2005 :22).

When the DESD came to an end, it was scrutinised on its effectiveness, and criticised as not having had the expected effect and has influenced its stakeholders in diverging ways (Martin *et al.*, 2013; UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). The outcomes of the DESD so far relate to the scattered interest and engagement seen on a national level within the HE sector. The UK National Commission for UNESCO identified four goals of the DESD (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013: 5):

- Facilitating networking and collaboration among stakeholders in ESD
- Fostering greater quality of teaching and learning of environmental topics
- Supporting countries in achieving their Millennium Development Goals
- Providing countries with new opportunities and tools to reform education

Compared to the PRME principles, the goals above are broad in nature too, with no tools and measures to reach the outlined aims. According to the UK Commission for UNESCO the results of the DESD goals to date, show that the interest of HEIs in ESD in the UK is scattered and their level of engagement varies between institutions (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). As a post DESD strategy, GAP aims to provide more concrete guidance to organisations, to put previously established goals into action (UNESCO, 2018a), by focusing on its priority areas of policy, learning, competency building of educators, local involvement and youth empowerment. How, and in what way, these concrete measures will be put into practice by UN member countries and supported by national organisations is yet to be seen, given their guiding nature.

The lack of an even spread of HE engagement is related to different governmental policies across each of the UKs countries that devote more or even less attention, and ultimately exercise less pressure on institutions to integrate ESD (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). A missing comprehensive UK national policy ultimately hinders a common strategic development of SD. As Martin *et al.* (2013) point out, it leads to a disparate development due to the different strategies of the countries to incorporate SD as part of their policies, varying levels of emphasis and different interpretations of SD and ESD respectively.

It may appear that HEIs are relatively more engaged with the subject matter of SD, and various events have taken place and research publications underpin this development. While declarations and initiatives such as PRME provide a good starting point for HEIs to pair up and share their

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experiences with one another, some argue that the non-binding nature of the agreements might not create enough urgency to make a change (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013; Wright, 2004). Declarations put HEIs initially in the spotlight for engaging with sustainability and highlighting a positive turn they are strategically taking. However, declarations do not necessarily show to what degree institutions are concerned with sustainable matters. Furthermore, signing a declaration might be initially positive, but it does not automatically mean that institutions engage more closely with sustainability or realise their initial strategies in the long-term. Some even claim that they are only empty words and often used as window dressing (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007) and others highlight that the developments are patchy and HE needs to involve more with the topic area (Tilbury, 2011). In addition, debates on defining the concept of SD and questioning the involvement of HE and its overall mission are ongoing.

Bekessy *et al.* (2007) point out that measures are needed to track progress and, more importantly, name and shame institutions that are failing to turn their plans into actions, and end using declarations as a means of window dressing that puts institutions into a positive light, with hardly or no consequences if goals are not met. Hence, binding actions are required through ESD declarations and governmental policies, in order to position SD and ESD as crucial future HE strategies. Further engagement relates to the creation of an overall UK SD strategy as discussed below and additional measures of organisations to engage signatories in transforming the stipulated goals in declarations such as greening campus operations, engagement of students in projects and curriculum changes. Nevertheless, UK Universities appear to focus more on environmental initiatives and activities than other elements of SD (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018).

Over the past two decades, the UK governments in power have devised several strategies to show their commitment to SD. In 1994 the UK was one of the first countries to produce an SD strategy, which was subsequently amended in 1999 (EAC, 2004) and superseded by “Securing the Future: Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy” in 2005 and an amended version in 2011 of the then coalition government. Appendix B provides an overview of a number of key strategies, frameworks and declarations on SD in Higher Education by governments and HE organisations in the UK.

In 2003 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) devised its ‘Sustainable Action Plan for Education and Skills’, commissioning the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As of April 2018 HEFCE was replaced by two new organisations, the ‘Office for Students’ and ‘UK Research and Innovation’. Further details are available on [www.officeforstudents.org.uk](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk) and [www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org).

to take the lead on driving SD across the HE sector in England (Department for Education and Skills, 2003b). Funding councils and other educational organisations in the devolved administrations were also assigned to taking the lead on encouraging Universities and further education providers to engage with SD (Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2006; UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). However, since the publishing of a consultation paper in 2005 and subsequent strategies (HEFCE, 2005a; HEFCE, 2005b; HEFCE, 2008), HEFCE has not only amended, but also softened its tone on SD in HE<sup>10</sup>, which can be linked to responses to their consultations and mixed reviews on the role of the agency in promoting sustainability across the University sector (Gough and Scott, 2007). One such criticism came from Knight (2005 [online]) who exclaimed that the HEFCE consultation paper is “one of the most pernicious and dangerous circulars ever to be issued. It represents the final assault on the last remaining academic freedom of Universities”.

In a policy brief to inform the UK Government on the progress of SD engagement, the UK division of UNESCO analysed each of the UK’s countries and their policies on SD and the progress of ESD (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). The lack of an overall or nationwide strategy is seen as one of the biggest barriers (Martin *et al.*, 2013; UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013) to support SD. Given that each country in the UK is putting more or less focus on SD policy and the overall missing governmental urgency, issues are bound to arise and lead to a disproportionate development of SD.

Educational organisations, but also governmental bodies struggle to grasp the importance of ESD, and are at odds about their role in pushing the sustainability agenda forward and why it even matters to them (Martin *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, initiatives such as the ‘Higher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ (HE21) project, which was overseen by the non-governmental organisation ‘Forum for the Future’, and ‘Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability’ (HEPS), have been criticised for the lack of progress achieved across the HE sector (Gough and Scott, 2007).

In the past few years, the UK government has also cut funding for sustainability related projects, such as for the independent advisory body SDC (Sustainable Development Commission). By stopping funding for the SDC the government set out to departmentalise SD issues, and rather divert control to the ‘Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs’ (DEFRA) and the ‘Environmental Audit Committee’ than an external body like SDC (EAC, 2010). Budget cuts in the

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<sup>10</sup> The consultation papers, responses and SD strategies are available in the web archive of the national archives that can be accessed through [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk).

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HEA have also led to the closure of 24 subject centres that supported the implementation of ESD directly with their related subject area (Chalkley and Sterling, 2011). A lack of governmental funding and lack of support from discipline specific centres can adversely affect the HE sector and slow SD activities down.

With the closure of the SDC and a new SD vision in 2011 the Government set out to work with all UK countries' governments (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, 2011). So far however, it lacks to define SD and how it relates to UK policy, but also struggles to set appropriate key indicators to measure achievements made and meet the targets proposed, as documented by the EAC (2011; 2013). The distribution of responsibilities over various departments can "lead [s] to a narrow focus and 'silo' approach to sustainable development" (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013 : 20). The silo approach has also been critically mentioned in the last report of the SDC, advising the government to a more open approach with SD and cross-departmental work (SDC, 2011). Overall this scatters the work of SD implementation across different levels and departments, risking the isolation of working towards, and ultimately diverting the attention off formulating a specific SD policy.

While the government has started greening its own departments and works on SD policy making<sup>11</sup>, concerns about a possible drift to favour economic issues more over societal and environmental problems persist due to the definition of SD, which highlights economic growth by only briefly touching on the social and environmental pillars (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). In spite of positive small-scale successes, a higher and also ongoing commitment is needed to work towards an overall UK SD policy. In light of the newly devised 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the commitment of the UK government to work towards achieving these, it is necessary for the UK Government to rethink the current focus on SD. However, in a recent report by the EAC, the UK response to SD and actions to implement the SDGs have seen a decline in commitment (Bigg, 2017; EAC, 2017), which is also evident in the lack of information and clarity on how the goals are going to be implemented (UK Government, 2017).

A national policy and a higher engagement with SD and ESD, can lead the way and direct institutions in implementing and further developing the concepts, unlike the current uncertainty towards ESD of the government in England (Martin *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, it would support the various declarations compiled over the years and strengthen their case. The political landscape in

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<sup>11</sup> Further information on the UK governments approach to greening its own departments and agencies can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

the UK has seen several changes in governments over the last few years, culminating in a referendum in June 2016 for the UK to leave the EU, and changes to SD related work and parties involved. Against the backdrop of the EU referendum, it is not known yet how a potential departure from the European Union will affect sustainability policy in the UK and further implications it might have on HE<sup>12</sup>.

## 2.3 Higher Education and Sustainable Development

### 2.3.1 Purpose of Higher Education

Sustainable Development has raised various debates over the years. In its debate on HEIs involvement, one of the most important questions asked is that of the purpose of HE in our society, and if Universities should serve to prepare and train students for future careers or if they have a higher purpose in providing students with the tools to become ethical and more well-rounded citizens. These are two conflicting views that are at odds, also referred to as the 'Real World View' and 'Ivory Tower View' (see Gough and Scott, 2007). Gough and Scott (2007) critically analyse the function of Universities and claim that HE cannot try to fulfil future expectations when those are not even known yet, relating to anything like skills expected from the industry or SD in general. A similar view is that of Orr (2004) who does not perceive education, at least in its current form, as the solution to the world's problems, by pointing out that the state the world is in was driven by leaders educated at some of the world's prestigious Universities<sup>13</sup>. Similarly, the former (and now retired) Vice Chancellor of City University Birmingham (then the University of Central England) (Knight, 2005 [online]), heavily criticised the sustainability agenda by saying that "It is not the job of Universities to promote a particular orthodoxy; it is their role to educate students to examine critically policies, ideas concepts and systems, then make up their own minds".

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<sup>12</sup> The HE sector faces potential problems, including that of a reduction of revenues through EU students, a lack of EU research funding, hiring of EU staff, and the ability for UK students to study in EU countries. Further details on possible implications Universities are facing and the uncertainty connected with leaving the EU can be found in (Mayhew, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> He goes on to question the purpose of education by saying that "conventional wisdom hold that all education is good, and the more of it one has the better... The truth is that without significant precautions [it] can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the Earth" (Orr, 2004: 6).

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The responsibility of Universities has changed over the years. In the past Higher Education was mainly concerned with teaching, research and administration. Contrary to Gough and Scott's view presented above, another mission 'engagement' has been added and Universities are now expected to contribute to societal issues, which emphasizes the responsibility of these institutions (Weber, 2012). HE has to rise up to the challenge of a highly globalised world, environmental problems and fast-paced changes in technological advances. According to Tilbury (2011), the sector cannot continue with a business as usual attitude but has to go the extra mile in order to achieve positive results in ingraining SD in the day to day activities of Universities. The magnitude of SD in particular requires the cooperation of actors on all levels, including Higher Education. Nevertheless, what the purpose of HE is and how Universities are to respond to socio-economic and environmental challenges still features in contested debates (Bell *et al.*, 2009).

Universities are crucial in pushing the sustainability agenda forward, as they not only hold the necessary means to undertake relevant research, but also educate a large number of students (Cortese, 2003; Fiselier *et al.*, 2018; Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018; Lozano, 2006; Weber, 2012). Considering the ever-increasing number of students that obtain academic degrees, Universities find themselves in a leading role to influence future graduates and leaders. As Bok (2010: 19) highlights, "our institutions are now the leading sources of all three of the most important ingredients for progress and prosperity in modern societies: new discoveries, expert knowledge and highly trained people". This puts HE in a powerful, and even more so responsible, position to educate and influence future decision makers on various economic and governmental levels and shape the development of future generations. Leading change therefore means that all academic disciplines have to be involved in order to push the development of sustainability further (Weber, 2012).

The views discussed so far relate to a UK perspective of HE and SD. It is important to bear in mind that SD is a Western construct (Gough and Scott, 2007; Kopnina and Meijers, 2014), that is often perceived and understood differently in other parts of the world, therefore the link it has to education might be different overall in other countries. A more detailed debate about the global perceptions and disagreements among academics from the same but also other related research areas such as Environmental Education (EE) is presented by Kopnina and Meijers (2014).

Although there are continuous debates about SD and its meaning, there is a widespread consensus that education plays a vital role in its implementation (Fiselier *et al.*, 2018; Gough and Scott, 2007; Tilbury, 2011; Weybrecht, 2017). It is also noted that the global dilemma our society is facing can be attributed to people educated at Universities around the world, institutions that helped leverage the irresponsible behaviour of organisational leaders and governmental decision

makers (Orr, 2004), as such “education is both part of the problem and the solution” (Sterling, 1996b: 18). This view highlights the economic influence on HE, which has led to the often criticised education of (business) students and the measures that should be taken to refocus HE strategies, if SD is to be successfully integrated into HE curricula.

Education is seen as a vital tool that can “help people reflect and act on these meanings and so realize alternative futures in more informed and democratic ways” (Huckle, 1996: 3). It is not about finding the one and only definition or perfect solution to the world’s problems, but to question and critically assess others and one’s own decisions and actions over time and improve these. HE, and education in general, has the means and the scope to reach and influence future generations in order to build a more sustainable society, by contributing to peoples’ learning, development and decision making processes (Reid, 1995). The aforementioned view is shared by Fiselier *et al.* (2018) who attribute a significant influence to the HE experience, knowledge and skills attained of students post graduating. In a recent cross-cultural study it was found that there is a correlation between students’ moral development and their time at University, which highlights the potential impact HEIs can have on ethical decision making of future leaders (Hanson *et al.*, 2017). Findings from a study conducted by Felgendreher and Löfgren (2018) correlate with results mentioned above, but suggest that students’ moral development appears to be different among different groups, areas of study and across gender.

### **2.3.2 The Changing Landscape in UK Higher Education**

The purpose of HE is linked with the transformations the sector has experienced over the past decades, and with it the changing expectations towards Universities missions, their teaching and research. Nevertheless, HE is also identified as a complex sector that is resistant to change (see section 2.5.1 & 2.5.2). Universities took a shift from being accessible to an elite group up to the 1960s, followed by a major increase in student numbers until the late 1970s (Deem, 2004). Funding cuts by the then Conservative government in the early 1980s subsequently led to first notions of institutions turning to other forms of funding, and an increased accountability of the work of institutions undertaken (Deem, 2004). Further changes include the transformation of polytechnics to Universities in the early 1990s, in order to increase the competition between institutions and push the standards and quality in higher and further education (see Deem, 1998; Deem, 2004).

The Dearing Report, one of the most distinctive reports carried out by Sir Ronald Dearing, proposed yet another major change in the HE landscape, the introduction of tuition fees. The

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report intended to cope with the high increase in student numbers in the late 1990s and the growing issue of government funding in the light of HE accessibility to the mass. The report subsequently led HEIs a step further towards operating in a more business-like fashion, to compete for external funding and enter business ventures (Barr and Crawford, 1998; Tapper and Salter, 1998).

With the White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education', published in the early millennium, another governmental legislation change put HE in a more self-reliant position by adding qualitative and competitive measures to the sector (Department for Education and Skills, 2003a). These measures relate to standards to increase the quality in teaching, focus on more profitable units and departments in institutions, the publishing of quality research papers in the pursuit to obtaining valuable resource funding and the increase in collaboration with the private sector. This was intended to make Universities more competitive within the UK and on a global scale. However, the governmental push towards a more market-like operation of Universities did not just force institutions to reinvent themselves and undertake structural changes by closing less profitable units, it also intended to increase the quality in research and teaching to produce more qualified graduates, high quality research and research outputs.

Furthermore, to the publication of the White Paper, the Higher Education Academy was founded and introduced the 'UK Professional Standards Framework' (UKPSA), to promote and develop the competencies of teaching staff and ultimately increasing the teaching quality (HEA, 2011).

Nevertheless, as Crawford (2009) highlights, these standards and guides, as well as further accreditation programmes that have been developed for Universities, are voluntary for HEIs. If and how Universities engage with the Professional Standards Framework or other professional development options is up to each individual institution (HEA, 2014c). Moreover, the training and accreditation opportunities solely focus on teaching staff without taking other academics into consideration.

More recent changes relate to the increase in tuition fees for home students introduced in 2012, following further governmental budget cuts to the HE sector. Funding cuts by the government have put Universities even more under pressure to become more independent and pursue different funding streams. The increase in tuition fees has also sparked debates on students as consumers and expectations tied to the costs of attending University (see Guilbault, 2018; Molesworth *et al.*, 2009; Nixon *et al.*, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). The most recent change refers to the 'Higher Education and Research Act 2017' that sets out to establish a new regulatory body, the Office for Students (OfS), which incorporates the newly launched 'Teaching Excellence

Framework' (TEF)<sup>14</sup>, as well as the creation of a second body the 'UK Research and Innovation' (UKRI) that will reorganise all research councils under one roof<sup>15</sup>. The changes in question are set to increase competition among Universities and ease access for new entrants in the sector. However, the changes can also be perceived as a power shift to the new organisations and a potential loss of autonomy of Universities.

The changes in legislation over the years were aimed at making the HE sector more competitive, in light of the global economic and technological changes and accommodating the higher number of enrolled students. The increase in student numbers has also seen a shift towards a more diverse student culture, including part-time, further education and international enrolments, widening the spectrum of learners from different backgrounds and ages (Arambewela, 2010; Van der Wende, 2002). The more market-driven approach was however more appealing to former polytechnics, as these institutions were part of local governments in the past and had experienced a more managerial style of operating, and were focusing mainly on teaching compared to traditional Universities that were less regulated and enjoyed the freedom of teaching and research (Deem, 2004).

### 2.3.3 Education for Sustainable Development

As with SD and the responsibilities of HE, further disagreement among scholars is caused by terminology relating specifically to education. Environmental Education (EE) for instance<sup>16</sup>, has been around since the 1970s, prominently focusing on the natural environment, and initially propagated by UNESCO and also included in the Belgrade Charter (Kopnina and Meijers, 2014).

After the publishing of the Brundtland Report and the Rio Declaration, other terminology appeared such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Education for Sustainability (EfS), Sustainability Education and others. The mid 1990s saw an emergence of ESD as a concept and

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<sup>14</sup> The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) "aims to recognize and reward excellence in teaching and learning, and help inform prospective student choices within higher education" (HEFCE, 2017 [online]). However, it has also raised questions among academics about the quality measures of excellent teaching, and the framework being used as a strategic tool to unnecessarily raise tuition fees (see Ashwin, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Further details on the Higher Education and Research Act are provided at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/contents/enacted>.

<sup>16</sup> In the Belgrade Charter, Environmental Education was seen to "develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones" (UNESCO, 1975: 3).

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can be said to have entered the mainstream agenda as it is frequently and officially used, and supported by governments and large organisations such as WBCSD, UNESCO and the HEA. While some authors (Arleymalm-Hagser and Sandberg, 2011; Eilam and Trop, 2010) use EE and ESD interchangeably, others (Hopkins and McKeown, 2005; Sterling, 2001) see it as a distinct concept, one that can be achieved through ESD. Sterling points out that EE has undergone various conceptual changes throughout its history but never achieved an overall integration into education, further suggesting that it “is not sufficient in itself in our quest for ‘sustainable education’” (2001: 30), which then explains the rise and mainstreaming of ESD. He further asserts that one flaw of EE as compared to ESD/EfS is the lack of systems thinking and systemic change (Sterling, 2004b). This is evident for instance in the Belgrade Charter and the Tblisi Declaration that call for EE and the rethinking of the part humans play within the natural environment, but fall short of suggesting what exactly education can do to achieve the outlined issues (UNESCO, 1975; UNESCO and UNEP, 1977). Major disparities between EE and the development of ESD and other concepts are fundamental differences in how the natural environment is perceived and the role of human involvement in it, with EE focusing on the preservation of the natural environment, while ESD takes societal and economic issues into consideration (Kopnina and Meijers, 2014).

The term I am using in my thesis is ESD, which has been defined as “a learning process (or approach to teaching) based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability and is concerned with all types of education” (UNESCO, 2009: 26). It appears that UNESCO has adapted its definition or ways to explain the meaning of ESD over the years as it now states that:

“ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about life-long learning and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education, which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy, and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society” (UNESCO, 2018b [online]).

ESD is depicted as a long-term process, guided by sustainability principles. The latter definition also puts the learner at the heart of ESD, by stressing the importance of life-long learning, the consideration of future generations and environmental, social and economic aspects. ESD therefore empowers learners in their decision-making, but also supports the development of necessary competencies like critical and systems thinking, creativity and shared learning and decision-making (UNESCO, 2018b).

Alternatively, the HEA (2018 [online]) defines ESD as “an interdisciplinary approach to learning that covers the integrated social, economic and environmental dimensions of the formal and

informal curriculum". Much like the UN definition, the HEA includes social, economic and environmental aspects in its definition. It is further stated that "ESD is a pedagogical approach that can help staff assist graduates who wish to develop the skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to an environmentally and ethically responsible society, and pursue a career that reflects those values" (HEA, 2018 [online]). While the UN definition shares similar aspects to that of the HEA, it is more transformative in nature with its aim to change society as stated above.

Both definitions presented above include a clear link to economic, social and environmental aspects, which raises concerns and debates about what drives this concept. As with objections toward SD, critics claim that ESD and its support of the triple bottom line, could promote the wrong ideals of growth and development, without fully taking environmental factors into consideration and allowing for other concepts to co-exist side by side (Jickling, 2005; Wals and Jickling, 2002) in particular, where development is referred to as economic growth (Lewis, 2005).

In addition, its Western origin leads to a lack of consideration for alternative meanings and values in non-western societies (Kopnina and Meijers, 2014). However, it is also worth pointing out that any terminology translated into other languages and country contexts might lose some of its meaning and intended context, never completely capturing the meaning initially intended in one language (McKeown & Hopkins, 2003). Nevertheless, strictly confining concepts only deflects from their common ground and that other concepts, much like ESD now, have faced the same debates in their early inception, for example EE (Hopkins and McKeown, 2005; Sterling, 2001). It can also be argued that the concept of EE reflects the problems of the time of its inceptions in the 1960s and 1970s and the global concern of pollution and environmental degradation and less so social concerns, which appeared later on agendas in the 1980s and 1990s (McKeown & Hopkins, 2003).

Sterling (2001) highlights three approaches to sustainability and education linked to learning namely education 'about', 'for' and 'as' sustainability. Education about Sustainability resembles the current state of education, where SD is a bolt-on to the existing curricular content that does not challenge students to critically learn, make decisions and take action. Thus, this form of education resembles first-order learning. In comparison, 'education for' terminologies resemble second-order learning, and are going further in critically reflecting on issues and advocating change, by however still clinging to the status quo i.e. economic growth. Education as Sustainability (or Sustainable Education as later referred to (Sterling, 2004a), according to Sterling (2001) resembles third-order learning and views education and sustainability as a process that is transformative and ongoing in nature, by constantly challenging the status quo to achieving a sustainable society. While these approaches can be seen as consecutive stages in shifting

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societies' sustainability efforts, Sterling (2001) admits that realistically most organisations fall into the 'about' category. Sterling (2001) himself uses the term 'Sustainable Education' which he explains takes a complete systems change of education into consideration, which is also the defining difference to ESD and EfS.

ESD is also often interchangeably used with EfS and Sustainable/Sustainability Education depending on researchers' perspectives taken (Hopkins and McKeown, 2005). When using Sterling's approaches discussed above, a clear distinction between Sustainable Education and ESD/EfS are identifiable in terms of learning. In comparison one could distinguish between ESD and EfS in terms of the focus put on the economic dimension of the triple bottom line (Sterling and Thomas, 2006). EfS can be defined as "the creation of space for transformative social learning. Such space includes space for alternative paths of development, space for new ways of thinking, valuing and doing; ...space for deep consensus, but also for respectful disagreement" (Wals and Corcoran, 2006: 107). This definition highlights a more inclusive view of EfS as a built-in approach that takes values, critical and reflective thinking, problem based learning, deep learning and participative actions into consideration, suggesting that the latter is more transforming in nature (Thomas, 2009). In contrast, ESD is argued to be more of a bolt-on approach to sustainability (Thomas, 2009) or an extension that fosters SD learning, while EfS takes on a more holistic approach in learning that transforms individuals lives (Lang, 2004; in Thomas, 2009).

However, there seems to be no clear differentiation and agreement on definitive differences between the terminologies in the literature. In analysing sustainability and education literature, it appears that researchers use terms interchangeably depending on contexts of collaborations and organisations seen in the examples of Tilbury (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013; Tilbury *et al.*, 2004; Tilbury *et al.*, 2002) and Sterling (Sterling, 2001; Sterling and Scott, 2008; Sterling and Thomas, 2006).

This thesis uses the term ESD because of its widespread use, predominantly by large organisations like the UN, and the belief that focusing on all three dimensions of environmental, social and indeed economic aspects is crucial in tackling global issues in a world that is characterised by interconnectedness and the ever-increasing pace of change. Other terminology is appreciated and acknowledged in the widespread debate.

Despite the prominent status ESD has achieved, education is often still not delivering on becoming more sustainable and that "any education for something, however worthy, such as for the environment, or citizenship tends to become both accommodated and marginalized by the mainstream" (Sterling, 2001: 14). However, it is also suggested that debates need to take place in different forms in order to tackle the problems humanity is facing, even if this leads to generalising and simplifying the issues around sustainability and education (Huckle, 1996).

Hopkins and McKeown (2005) support this view and argue that, while names are important, construction of the concept of ESD takes precedence over terminology.

Despite the criticism of ESD mentioned above, I believe that an idea has to enter the mainstream to garner attention, and as much agreement as possible to reach out to as many people as possible. In addition, it leaves flexibility for business schools to engage with sustainability themes and adapt it to their own context and needs (Weybrecht, 2017). Even though ESD has shortcomings, it has achieved a presence to contribute to the systemic change needed within education over the years. Furthermore, while the focus on environmental, social and economic factors might be criticised as part of ESD and SD respectively, one could argue that the current pace of change, which inevitably increases, and the interconnectedness in our world, requires exactly this balance and adaption in order to solve global problems. Throughout the thesis, I am using the term ESD in conjunction with SD, reflecting on and embodying the diverse nature of the concept, the critical debates on education and its purpose in an ever-changing society, and the complexities in grappling with and integrating such a multi-faceted concept.

### **2.3.4 ESD and Business Schools**

Business schools have become important assets for Universities. In the UK and the rest of the world, they are enjoying an unprecedented growth and generate a large amount of Universities' income, or as Starkey *et al.* (2004: 146) put it "the business school is the cash cow in a University system increasingly squeezed of cash from the public purse". With recent changes in legislation in the UK and governmental funding cuts for Universities, many institutions have not only increased tuition fees but also ventured for other funding opportunities by offering more popular degree courses such as business and management, particularly MBA degrees that boost their income. Given that Universities need to generate income and business schools attract a large number of international students (Clark, 2004), it is no surprise as to how much emphasis is put on the expansion of business studies at HEIs.

The UK is one of the most favourable destinations for international students. According to the Department for Education, the UK ranked second in the world in 2011 as a study destination for international students with 13 per cent, just behind the US with 16 per cent (Department for Business Innovation & Skills and Department for Education, 2013). The continuously increasing number of domestic and foreign students (HESA, 2002; 2008; 2013; 2017) emphasises the

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responsibilities and the impact that UK HEIs have on a far reaching global scale, including the cooperation with various organisations, campuses abroad, international research projects, and therefore, influence on world issues (Boks and Diehl, 2006; Galang, 2010; Ogbuigwe and Lotz-Sisitka, 2012; Weybrecht, 2017). The popularity to undertake business and management degrees leads some to believe that teaching these subjects in traditional ways, may lead to educating outdated theories and concepts to future leaders and decision makers, with little impact on business (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

With a large number of students undertaking business and management degrees, rather than studying traditional subject areas, the exposure and reach of business education has widened to a greater audience. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) the numbers of students studying business and related subjects at Universities in the UK (excluding further education) has gone up by more than seven percent from the academic year of 2000/01 to 2007/08 (HESA, 2008). In the academic year of 2015/2016 nearly a third of all students studying towards a taught University degree were enrolled in business courses (HESA, 2017). When put into perspective the increase in business and management courses and the popularity of the UK as a study destination, the influence of business schools is not surprising on a large number of graduates.

The impact business schools have on a micro and macro scale is tremendous. It is estimated that local communities in the UK alone gain more than GBP 7.5 billion per year, whereas other factors linked to teaching and research are not yet included in this calculation (Cooke and Galt, 2010). It is not just the monetary value of the sector, but also its reputation that highlights the place the UK take in the business education landscape. Rankings often used, such as from the Financial Times or the Aspen Institute, commonly place UK business schools and MBA programmes in top positions in their league tables. In 2013 the UK came second behind the US with the number of MBA programmes represented in the Financial Times Global MBA Ranking (FT, 2013). In the most recent ranking, the UK again came second (FT, 2017). In a comparison of European business schools, the UK is again in a leading position (FT, 2012; 2016). While the rankings on the one hand indicate a schools' reputation and provide a guide for potential future students, they on the other hand only present a limited number of institutions and are, in the case of the Financial Times rankings, based on subjective factors such as the starting salary of graduates. These rankings can however, provide an indicator on the state of UK business schools and their reputation among prospective students.

The many scandals in the business arena over the past couple of decades, including two of the most prominent corporate downfalls of Enron and Arthur Anderson among many others, have

also led to a heated discussion of the role that business schools play in our societies (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). Furthermore, the recent economic downturn has exacerbated debates and put business schools into the spotlight once again. Some go as far as blaming business schools for failing to educate students appropriately for their future career, as many of the managers involved in the business decisions made were educated at some of the most respectable Universities in the world (Ghoshal, 2005). Rasche and Escudero (2010) agree to an extent with Ghoshal that many decision makers were exposed to economic theories on which false decisions were made, but point out that one cannot solely hold business schools accountable for the wrongdoings of corporations and the recent economic downturn. They point out that it is important to act on what has happened and take the opportunity to initiate changes instead of dwelling on the past events (Rasche and Escudero, 2010).

From the view point of Ghoshal (2005) business schools do not need new courses teaching responsibility, but simply have to drop some theories and concepts taught so far from the curriculum. The suggestion Ghoshal makes sounds simple at first, but it was these theories of profit maximisation that have pushed business and management towards being more perceived as a profession and a more respectable research area. Furthermore, the reach these teachings had over the years are tremendous, because a large number of individuals, students and executives alike were exposed to them globally (Ghoshal, 2005).

### **2.3.5 Current Development in ESD**

The mind-set of business schools to focus primarily on economic theories has, and is, continuously changing. There is a consensus that business schools have a responsibility to prepare their students, the world's future business leaders, adequately in order to ensure a sustainable growth of business processes (Biedenweg *et al.*, 2013). More research into sustainability issues is being undertaken and published, and business schools are increasingly engaging with different areas that fit under the SD umbrella such as responsible business and teaching, and the various stakeholders that they address. A positive development can also be seen in the different events on ESD offered by the HEA, EAUC, UNPRME and other organisations supporting the exchange of knowledge and relationship building of academics, students, and other stakeholders interested in ESD (HEA, 2014a; UNPRME, 2013b; UNPRME, 2014).

Morand (2012: 38) even suggests that "sustainable concepts are now perfectly and largely integrated within business schools". It is questionable to what degree this is the case, as the engagement of Universities with ESD varies greatly and there are no actual measures for an

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adequate comparison of the initiatives undertaken or Quality Assurance (QA) standards in place to compare institutions across the board. Although there is a growth in activity across business schools, it is claimed the changes taking place are too slow and institutions are nowhere near putting SD at the core of everything they are doing (Weybrecht, 2015; Weybrecht, 2017). A similar opinion is voiced by Tilbury (2011) who highlights that despite a growth in environmentally friendly practices, HEIs have not managed to implement SD overall in curricula yet and that efforts are rather patchy and scattered. This view is shared by other academics (Leal Filho, 2011; Ngawana, 2009) who point towards a lack of curriculum related activities, beyond green issues, of HEIs and questions raised of business schools' lack of fully understanding the impact they have on a larger scale (Weybrecht, 2017). Although there are a number of case-studies in the academic literature that are highlighting good practices of Universities, they are often also related to the environmental aspect of SD (see Tilbury, 2011). An overview and comparison of Universities and their SD engagement is also available through the 'People & Planet University League' table (People and Planet, 2014b).

Even though the engagement with SD has increased, the predominantly case study related research has been criticised to often lack a theoretical connection to research areas such as organisational change that can facilitate the interpretation of the case study results (Corcoran *et al.*, 2004; Fien, 2002). Clark (2004: 6) however, suggests to use case study research "that balances descriptions of institutionally unique complexities with inductive conceptualization of elements common across cases".

Research frequently also dismisses to base fieldwork conducted in the appropriate research paradigms and designs, which ultimately raises questions on the ethical nature of the research, the data gathered and analysed, among others (Fien, 2002). The claims may be valid as there is a number of case study based research on SD and ESD respectively with foci on the subject matter to varying degrees and levels. However, providing a comprehensive overview of activities in HEIs, even broken down to business schools alone, and comparing initiatives across the sector is a complex undertaking due to a number of factors that differentiate institutions from each other (Weybrecht, 2017), including institutional differences in income, background, specialism, and history.

As a guideline for business schools, a starting point could be the UNPRME principles, a global initiative established by the United Nations (UN). Currently 72 UK Business Schools/HEIs are signed up to this initiative, out of which about 60 are sharing information on the progress of integrating sustainability into the strategy of their institution (UNPRME, 2018). While the initiative

differentiates between signatories based on their subscription and engagement, institutions' involvement still lacks measures to allow for a comparison among other organisations.

The UNPRME (UNPRME, 2013b) even emphasizes that "corporate responsibility and sustainability have entered but not yet become embedded in the mainstream of business-related education". After all, it is a voluntary initiative and participating in it does not show the true altruistic reasoning of an institution to engage with more responsible education or what business schools are doing beyond publishing a glossy PRME report. If and when business schools sign-up to PRME, there is no evidence that an engagement leads to further ESD integration (Burchell *et al.*, 2015). Moreover there are calls that PRME and other initiatives need to step up their game and increase their involvement with business schools (Weybrecht, 2017), as one can argue that simply reporting on SD activity is not enough. Nevertheless, unresponsive business schools that do not communicate and report on their sustainability activities are de-listed and named on the PRME website.

The literature shows that there is an increase in SD awareness across HEIs through increasing publications and campus greening activities, but further measures need to be taken in order to address the issue of implanting SD into business school curricula and teaching (Morand, 2012; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013; Tilbury, 2011; Weybrecht, 2017). The question arising is, what slows the implementation of ESD in business school curricula down and what factors can push its adoption?

Weybrecht (2017) argues that many business schools do not engage to the extent that they could, and questions the recognition of their own importance and role they play in educating future leaders. Barth (2013) on the other hand highlights that many Universities seem to underestimate the implementation of SD, seeing the change process as something that can be controlled through accurate planning, execution and the elimination of issues, often underestimating the importance of barriers and drivers and how these are connected to one another. As mentioned above case studies undertaken often lack the grounding needed with relevant academic theories. A better understanding of the theoretical framework of SD can aid HEIs in planning and executing their change strategies. Opposing views from the change management literature however, show that any alteration in organisations can be complex. SD requires dramatic systemic changes and cannot be planned but should be seen as a process that allows a more long-term perspective (Tilbury, 2011).

## 2.4 Challenges of ESD Integration

The drivers and barriers of ESD are closely connected, and require the collaboration and support of all stakeholders, in order to successfully integrate it in the long-term and weave it into the fabric of HE and education in general. Tilbury (2012) mentions that difficulties to implement ESD could stem from the fact that SD is often seen as a task that has a clear start and an end. Whereas SD is more like a process or should be seen from a systemic view as it requires a long-term perspective, the engagement with other departments and disciplines and a thinking outside of the box approach. As with any change process, ESD too can fail at any stage of the implementation process. Taking barriers into consideration and why there is resistance is therefore of utmost importance. Practitioners should learn from the mistakes that they make, and use the change process as a “testing field” to find out what works best for each particular University environment (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013).

The next section looks more closely at challenges that business schools are facing to implement ESD. Several drivers and barriers that can, both, push or hold ESD integration back are discussed. Barriers to SD and ESD integration have been widely discussed (Barth, 2013; Leal-Filho, 2000; Lozano, 2006; Naeem and Neal, 2012; Thomas, 2004) and can be of external or internal nature<sup>17</sup>. Martin *et al.* (2006) for example broadly categorise barriers to ESD as a lack of knowledge, institutional engagement, a packed curriculum, and a lack of relevant material. Whatever challenges business schools are facing, individual circumstances and backgrounds of institutions are likely to influence any attempts to integrate ESD (Weybrecht, 2015). The following section will focus on a selection of barriers that have been mentioned across various publications consulted for this literature review.

### 2.4.1 Quality Assurance and Accreditation

In addition to increasing emphasis on governmental policies (see section 2.2.3), more attention should be paid to quality within the implementation of ESD, which was also one of the goals of

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<sup>17</sup> Barriers or resistance factors of ESD have been broadly documented in academic literature (see Exter *et al.*, 2013; Lidgren *et al.*, 2006; Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008; Thomas, 2004), some to a greater extent than others. As part of a change process barriers are crucial to the outcome of ESD transformations in HE.

the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, specifically in teaching and learning, as mentioned above (UK National Commission for UNESCO, 2013). Quality can be seen as “the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013 [online]). In HE the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is overseeing and supporting Universities in setting standards and using the necessary measures to reach them. The QAA states that quality is “how well your University or college supports your learning” through teaching, support, resources and assessment methods, so QA is overall about “students having the best possible experience at University or college” (QAA, 2013 [online]).

In order to ensure that the quality at Universities in the UK is met the QAA has developed the ‘UK Quality Code for Higher Education’ that sets out the minimum expectations of Universities required to achieve, by auditing these on a continuous basis and recommending improvements to be made (QAA, 2012). It is important in order to ensure that a set of standards across the HE sector is in place, by also focusing on quality in the learning environment and the willingness of institutions for further improvement (QAA, 2014). Universities as self-governed institutions have the freedom to decide in which way to fulfil the expectations set out (QAA, 2014). They are required to fulfil QA laid out expectations, while also having the autonomy to improve and go beyond the expected objectives (QAA and HEA, 2008)<sup>18</sup>.

Quality in teaching and learning is also emphasized by the ‘Ministerial Round Table’ on Quality Education, initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in a guide that advises Universities on its importance, in order to cope with the changing nature of the HE landscape, the expectations of a rising number of students and other stakeholders (Henard and Roseveare, 2012). Furthermore, the authors of the guide point out that quality teaching and learning is significant, in order for graduates to be able to deal with global changes and challenges (Henard and Roseveare, 2012). Focusing on quality and developing standards therefore, could help to facilitate the meaning of the highly debated construct of SD, and how it relates to HE, while also guiding academics and others in working with the concept.

QA is seen as an important factor in pushing the agenda of ESD forward as both share similar concerns and goals accordingly, in terms of enhancing the status quo within HE by involving all

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<sup>18</sup> The development of quality (assurance/enhancement) in Higher Education has been contested and seen various policy and agency changes over the years. Further details on the development of quality assurance in the UK HE sector, in the evolving context of marketisation across the sector can be found in various publications (see Enders and Westerheijden, 2014; Filippakou, 2017; Hoecht, 2006).

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stakeholders (Martin *et al.*, 2009; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Martin *et al.* (2009: 2) also point out that “quality education should facilitate and promote human relationships characterised by justice, peace and negotiated mutual interests which lead to greater equity, respect and understanding”. This also highlights that both ESD and QA are working on common grounds. QA is providing Universities with a set of expectations needed to measure and deliver quality in HE, which could be translated to ESD related objectives and goals such as teaching and learning, in order to place it firmly on the HE agenda (Ryan, 2012).

In a HEFCE funded project across five UK Universities<sup>19</sup> to connect ESD with QA and QE (Quality Enhancements) aspects, running from 2010 – 2012, the institutions involved set their own agenda on how to bring QA and ESD together (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). At the time of the project HE was going through a lot of structural and policy changes and the Universities that took part did not necessarily achieve measurable outcomes, but rather raised awareness and ensured that the challenges in the HE landscape did not absorb the ESD study undertaken (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Key themes recognised were the engagement with QA staff, building ESD in current institutional strategies, raising awareness among different stakeholder groups involved and curriculum related aspects such as setting Key Performance Indicators (KPI) or best practice examples. Although methods to connect QA and ESD were different across the participating institutions, probably also due to the already existing engagement with the subject matter, all Universities showed an engagement with professional development and measures to further strengthen this aspect.

Linking quality and ESD is also necessary in terms of accreditation purposes for HEIs and their degree subjects, which can help set up a standard for existing teaching and integration initiatives of ESD. Accreditation also refers to new teaching practices and methods and their assessment in order to guarantee a standard across the board (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). Within business education, some of the most important accreditation agencies are the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) established in the United States (US) and the Association of MBAs (AMBA) that caters to MBA programmes.

All associations vary in terms of ESD engagement by information given on their websites and publications. While smaller associations such as the Accreditation Council for Business Schools & Programs (ACBSP) show a minor interest in ESD, the AACSB offers a range of information on

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<sup>19</sup> The project included the University of Brighton, the University of Exeter, Aston University, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Gloucestershire, which led and oversaw the study.

sustainability, a dedicated conference and a resource centre that is providing business schools with information related to SD and the possibility to connect with other researchers (AACSB, 2014). Although the AACSB provides a wealth of information on SD and business ethics, it refrains from interfering too much with business schools' philosophies and strategic direction taken with regard to SD issues (AACSB, 2014b). This is different with EFMD that has clearly laid out in its statutes that SD and other related areas are a part of the accreditation process for business schools (EFMD, 2013). Nevertheless, how this is translated into practice, whether it is through stand-alone courses or integration across the business curriculum is left to business schools to determine (EFMD, 2013).

Similarly, to the EFMD, AMBA highlights some SD factors that are necessary for MBA accreditation purposes. These have been included and incorporated into different principles, however, suggestions are broad in nature and are only relevant for Masters and not Doctoral students (AMBA, 2014; AMBA, 2016). As with EFMD, business schools are left to decide how they tackle SD and related topics in the curriculum. In addition, the websites show less of an engagement with SD relevant topics, by focusing more on connecting members for networking purposes or future collaborations. Considering the voluntary nature of accreditation and compliance, questions arise to the effective contribution of ESD integration in business schools (Stuart *et al.*, 2014). Overall, there seems to be a diverging interest and engagement of accreditation associations with SD, and therefore a sketchy picture of the impact that they might have on business schools, quality and ESD.

The focus on quality and ESD integration brings about challenges as it requires Universities to scrutinise their educational being, a task that demands changes at the grass-root-level of a HE strategy (Ryan and Cotton, 2013). Challenging the status quo also involves questioning the mission or goal of institutions as mentioned earlier (see section 2.3.1). Furthermore, like ESD, quality is a concept that is hard to grasp and is controversially debated. Quality ranges in its definition, depending on the context it is placed in and the importance it is given, hence, making it difficult to measure (Martin *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, this can be attributed to SD and ESD whose meaning and level of urgency depend on the (cultural and political) context it is placed in. As it is challenging to find a common ground for both concepts, debates are likely to continue and differences in interpretation of both should be taken into consideration, unless clear measurement tools are put in place. In addition, further research is needed to establish the outcomes of quality and QA respectively (Rickinson, 2001) in ESD, as research so far is rather case study focused and does not show how outcomes develop over time (Martin *et al.*, 2009).

As with any changes a common issue that is also inherent in the area of QA is staff and their lack of knowledge of the concept of SD or even confusion due to the many debates (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). The lack of understanding SD and ESD is further found in teacher training programmes as found in a study of Geography teachers (see Corney, 2006). This issue can be found across the board of education and non-education institutions as mentioned above (see section 2.2.3) further discussed in section 2.4.5.

### **2.4.2 Students as a Driver of Sustainability**

Making inherent changes and connecting QA and ESD calls students into action, including their role in pushing the HE agenda towards a better study experience and understanding of the role that students have in the ESD debate. The HE landscape has changed over the past decade, with institutions that have become more like corporate entities, increased tuition fees, and students that have turned into customers that are shaping the sector. While there is an increase in SD literature and a reported increase in students' interest in, and engagement with, SD (Mulà *et al.*, 2017; Weybrecht, 2017), little is known about students' expectations towards SD, connected skills and how they push ESD forward. However, according to Weybrecht (2015) University students now are more aware of sustainability issues than previous cohorts, having grown up with socio-economic and environmental issues.

There are a number of case studies that emphasise a higher demand of SD by students however, these mainly focus on single institutions, making a generalisation of outcomes of students' attitudes difficult. Barber and Venkatachalam (2013) for instance surveyed 639 undergraduate students from four different departments at a US University and found an overall positive attitude to SD and related areas, however, the differences in expectations on course inclusion of the topics differed widely. In another student oriented survey (Lopez *et al.*, 2005) including 353 participants at a US business school, the authors found a lower tolerance toward unethical behaviour in students that were at the end of their business studies and had an engagement in their course with a business ethics subject. These findings are interesting as a study conducted by Allen *et al* (2005) point towards the exact opposite, highlighting that senior students care less about SD related issues. Other research looks at male and female students' attitudes (Lämsä *et al.*, 2008; Lopez *et al.*, 2005). Further case studies conducted again focus on single institutions in various countries, making generalisations difficult. Overall, the studies show a positive attitude to towards SD related issues.

More recently a longitudinal study of the HEA and the National Union of Students (NUS) looked, amongst other things, at participants' attitudes towards SD and skills built around the concept (Drayson, 2015; Drayson *et al.*, 2012; 2013; 2014). The outcome of the surveys conducted show a positive attitude of students towards SD in each year, while also highlighting issues related to the flawed understanding of the concept that is often associated solely with environmental issues, as well as the importance of employability skills connected to a HE experience and the possible connection with sustainability skills (Drayson *et al.*, 2012; 2013; Drayson and Taylor, 2015). The issues mentioned are prevalent in all surveys undertaken, and it is suggested to engage students more in the development and incorporation of SD in curricular and operational activities, in order to increase their SD literacy skills but also considering their important status as a client and not merely a student (Drayson *et al.*, 2013). While the latest study in 2015 shows a slight increase in SD awareness among students throughout the course of its execution, it also shows some inconsistent and contradicting reporting, which is rather confusing to the reader.

Students are already engaging with SD projects across UK Universities such as the NUS Students' Green Fund<sup>20</sup>, Green Impact<sup>21</sup>, Student Switchoff<sup>22</sup>, and The Green Academy<sup>23</sup>, all supported by the NUS (HEA, 2014b; NUS, 2014; NUS Green Impact, 2014; NUS Students' Green Fund, 2014). Another initiative is The 'Green Office Model', developed by several students at Maastricht University. It is a student led project, in collaboration with staff, to increase awareness and support a University wide implementation of SD. The Green Office Model has been copied by several Universities across Europe and the UK, including the University of Greenwich and the University of Exeter (Students' Green Unit, 2014; Sustainability Hub, 2014).

Although these examples highlight a strong engagement of students, more can be done to increase their participation. More research into student specific factors should be undertaken, in order to understand what influences students in choosing the University they wish to attend and how SD related skills can affect these and their future career (Drayson *et al.*, 2013). In addition, students should be more involved in the transformation process through SD in order to create

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<sup>20</sup> The NUS Students' Green Fund is an initiative funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that has supported about 25 student unions across the UK in order to fund student led projects.

<sup>21</sup> The Green Impact is an environmental accreditation scheme that engages staff and students in environmental projects across campuses by additionally rewarding positive engagement.

<sup>22</sup> Student Switch Off is an initiative that encourages students to save energy, with 54 participating universities across the UK.

<sup>23</sup> This programme, led by the HEA, has involved 18 UK universities to date in incorporating SD into their curricular activities.

momentum, by raising the demand for a more responsibly related University environment, as this can work against the fear of change (Alabaster and Blair, 1996). Overall students have the means necessary to build up momentum and create followers in the study community, to increase awareness of the ESD agenda (Spira, 2014; Taylor, 2014).

#### **2.4.3      Institutional Strategy and Leadership**

A top-down approach, initiated from a senior manager or leader of an organisation, is seen as vital in supporting the long-term implementation of ESD (Bekessy *et al.*, 2003; Carpenter and Meehan, 2002; Fiselier *et al.*, 2018; Sharp, 2002; Shiel and Jones, 2016; Weybrecht, 2015), as a bottom-up approach by individual academics and proponents alone will not create a lasting transformation of institutions' strategies towards a more responsible practice (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007). Thompson and Green (2005: 7) agree with this approach but propose that individuals should circumvent the risk of having to solely rely on leaders support but instead "develop strategies that do not assume a top-down approach". This suggests that individuals should have a plan B ready if no support is to be expected by senior management and leaders of a HEI. Given the crucial involvement of University leaders, Bekessy *et al.* (2007) even suggest to scrutinize leaders actions directly in the public light.

Implementing change into any organisation requires support and guidance by senior management and leaders of an institution (Bekessy *et al.*, 2003; Littledyke *et al.*, 2013; Shiel and Williams, 2015; Weybrecht, 2015), to further drive and strengthen the case for the integration of ESD into University curricula. However, according to Shiel and Jones (2016) supportive leadership and senior management who recognize the urgency of, and understand ESD is not the norm yet but rather an exception. Research by Snelson-Powell *et al.* (2016) suggests that where the will to integrate sustainability is present and supported through SD experts, institutions are more likely to put strategies and policies into practice. In addition, it also requires a bottom-up approach from academic and other support staff, as only a mixed approach and the motivation and interest to change from the top and the bottom can create a balanced environment to tackle the integration of ESD development (Lozano, 2006). Besides staff, a bottom-up approach also refers to students who should play a more important role in participation to transform the curriculum as their contribution can push the change process forward, while involving them in creating a better environment (Alabaster and Blair, 1996). All stakeholders, whether top or bottom, are needed as "it is a shared responsibility for each individual of that institution" (Alabaster and Blair, 1996 :103; Weybrecht, 2015).

University leaders are in a favourable position to influence or drive a change process. This refers not exclusively, but also to the provision of financial resources that, if not available, often hinder Universities to engage with current global and societal issues, as documented in a case study of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (Bok, 1990; Hopkins and McKeown, 2005; Thomas, 2004). The top support can make funds and financial resources available for sustainability projects, that can create a lasting impact in the long-term (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007).

Tying aspects such as funding into an organisation's strategy and promoting interdisciplinary partnerships, while continuously communicating the progress can catapult the importance of SD onto the agenda of institutions (Downey, 2004). Interdisciplinary work, beyond the boundaries of the business school, is argued to enhance and contribute to the debate of ESD, considering its very nature of being an interdisciplinary concept that covers other academics disciplines such as environmental sciences, engineering and others (Annan-Diab and Molinari, 2017). Funding in particular is seen as a crucial driver to facilitate ESD projects and initiatives in HEIs, but it lacks priority in comparison to other organisational goals as mentioned by Fiselier *et al.* (2018). Further support can be given by freeing academics overloaded schedules in order to allow a deeper engagement with the concept of SD (Hayles and Holdsworth, 2008).

However, the complexity of HE and the urgency to implement ESD into the overall actions of Universities, can complicate and slow down change efforts (see section 2.5.1). In addition, this change process cannot only be left to individuals or leaders who show an interest in SD, but requires the cooperation of all stakeholders within a University. Leadership, perseverance, and a long-term view that leaves room for flexibility and adaption to complex situations are significant factors in an institutions change strategy (Sharp, 2002; Tilbury, 2011). Incorporating ESD is a mammoth task that needs time to meet with approval of most stakeholders and gather the supporters of a very wide and varied landscape of departments, schools and faculties.

#### **2.4.4      Organisational Culture**

So far, it appears challenging to incorporate ESD into curricula, less so into a University's daily operations such as waste management or energy reduction, as many campus greening projects are underway or have been put in place to ensure the reduction of environmental effects. The more apparent challenge refers specifically to a built-in approach, i.e. an incorporation of ESD into all facets of a University's curriculum, as opposed to a bolt-on approach that often side-tracks ESD as stand-alone modules that are detached from other modules and processes in schools and faculties (Sterling and Thomas, 2006).

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Greening University operations and shaking up the curriculum is only one step in implementing ESD and transforming the HE landscape. Building and fostering the right cultural environment is necessary in order to transform a change process (Hargreaves, 1997), and create a culture that embraces change, while avoiding that only motivated staff are engaging and pushing ESD forward (Hayles and Holdsworth, 2008). Creating a common goal or clear purpose and effective communication of an institutions sustainability strategy can be a first step in working towards a cultural change (Littledyke *et al.*, 2013). However, the support for such changes is needed by everyone within an institution, whether academic or operations staff, in order to drive ESD integration and does not stop once responsibilities have been assigned (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018).

In a project at RMIT University in Australia, Hayles and Holdsworth (2008) present the findings of their research in integrating ESD into the institution's curriculum through a stand-alone course and the integration into some modules. The change management process was led by an action learning approach, aimed to engage academic staff with SD related matters and become more pro-active and forward thinking. The researchers were in the favourable position to have had the support of senior managers but also to ransom some of the ESD enthusiasts from their busy daily commitments with the funding provided, which enabled a mixed approach from bottom and top. Additionally, the team was well prepared to counteract and work towards barriers such as preparing school specific approaches, and involve academics in a University wide survey to learn about their attitude on SD implementation. Overall the project showed that individuals from the top and the bottom are crucial in cooperating, as well as collaborations across disciplines, but also time and the culture prevalent in different departments (Hayles and Holdsworth, 2008). Therefore, HEIs have to be clear on the importance of ESD and how it can benefit them, as it can otherwise create various issues in putting ideas into practice (Ryan, 2012; Weybrecht, 2015).

Organisational culture is strongly debated in research with some advocating the idea to change an organisation's culture (see Cameron and Green, 2015; Hughes, 2006; Scott, 1999), while others challenge this view due to the flawed nature and fuzziness of the understanding of the term culture (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 2003; Salaman, 1997). HEIs are a collection of different areas of interest and cultures (Holmberg *et al.*, 2008). Considering the complex nature of ESD, attention should be given to the differences within a University, such as school and faculty as views and priorities can differ greatly and disagreements are inevitable (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, there is a lack of cooperation even among departments and disciplines (Weybrecht, 2015), which suggests that cultural differences also exist in business schools and might be greater than assumed. Littledyke *et al.* (2013: 376) refer to this lack of collaboration and engagement as "silo mentality", and emphasise the importance of bridging differences across disciplines considering that there are different ways of working. Others call upon Universities to lower their walls and

engage across disciplines in order to avoid falling behind in research and collaborations, to tackle socio-economic and environmental problems (Currie *et al.*, 2016).

As shown in the case study of RMIT University, time is necessary to create an environment more open to change and to embed SD into different departments' contexts. Ultimately, influencing organisational culture and performing a change does not happen overnight. Hughes (2006) highlights that an organisational culture cannot be altered as part of a change management process, but instead develops or changes in the long-term. This view suggests that a company can influence its culture over the course of time, but cannot change the overall beliefs and values of a group of employees in the short term.

#### **2.4.5 Staff and Individual Interest**

The concept of SD is still in its infancy, and just as any other innovation or new idea it needs support to become ingrained in our daily lives and actions. One stakeholder group that has received little attention, although frequently mentioned in publications, is academic staff and their importance in integrating SD into HE curricula.

Organisational change profits from advocates' support and employees are crucial in its implementation. This is also highlighted by Ryan and Tilbury (2013) who point out that each academic has to be reminded of their role in this process of change, ultimately it is a collective effort that this transformational process needs. This view on staff was also supported by a number of ESD researchers at the UNESCO Chair Conference on Higher Education for Sustainable Development at Leuphana University in 2011 (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, Littledyke *et al.* (2013) report of a lack of attention on staff as contributors to ESD integration in multiple case studies. Equally important is the work undertaken across University disciplines, bringing all individuals involved together to engage in research, campus and community projects (Lozano *et al.*, 2013).

Academics in particular are seen as one of the main barriers and gatekeepers, but at the same time also the biggest driver of implementing ESD into business school and University curricula respectively (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Cummins, 1999; Orlitzky and Moon, 2008; Warren and Tweedale, 2002; Weybrecht, 2015). In an early survey by the Institute of Business Ethics, individuals with an interest in business ethics were emphasised as the drivers of this specific subject area at UK business schools (Cummins, 1999; in Warren and Tweedale, 2002). Similar outcomes are reported in a survey conducted across European and North American

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business schools (Orlitzky and Moon, 2008), placing individuals yet again at the top of the driving forces of CSR and related areas, closely followed by leaders of HEIs. Even with more recent initiatives such as PRME, it is yet again individuals or champions who drive the principles' implementation process (Burchell *et al.*, 2015).

More recently Brammer *et al.* (2012) interviewed 122 senior management staff (67 deans and 55 MBA programme directors) from all UK business schools on the issue of SD curriculum integration. The responses of the interviewees suggest that all schools are engaging with SD, often pushed by enthusiasts, but the level of engagement varies across the board. Issues range from a lack of understanding the concept and how it feeds into their own strategy, differences in the engagement of staff and support of senior managers, diverging interests between teaching and research staff, academic freedom, as well as the low reputation that sustainability related articles have in the publishing field (Brammer *et al.*, 2012). Considering the low reputation of publishing in the area of SD, or research strategy and funding of HEIs, academics might refrain from engaging with sustainability, but instead focus on research that leverages their career prospects.

Conducting research is important, but it is notably teaching staff who are at the forefront of providing students with the course content of their studies, by having the autonomy to create and teach at their own discretion (Cant and Kulik, 2009; Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). In a project to incorporate business ethics into the curriculum of the CWU University, Cant and Kulik (2009) highlight that academic staff often made excuses, holding the view that others should deal with the issue of business ethics or assumed it had been dealt with already. The research of Cant and Kulik (2009) presents similarities to that of Fiselier *et al.* (2018) who found that staff often avoided ESD due to high workloads and the misconception that it created additional work. Some case studies also suggest that there is simply no interest in SD (Dahle and Neumayer, 2001) or that researchers do not perceive it as relevant to their work (Fien, 2002). Where involved in teaching SD though, academics can take on an important role as facilitators of students' sustainability learning as described by Hurth *et al.* (2015) in a curricular initiative across Plymouth University Business School.

Kitamura and Hoshii (2010) who looked at ESD in Japanese Universities state that SD is not seen as a priority for some academics. The study also highlights the lack of participants in ESD related projects, and ultimately a scattered approach across different subject areas, the higher emphasis placed on green issues and the lack of funding to support relevant projects (Kitamura and Hoshii, 2010). As mentioned earlier, academics might choose to undertake research in more favourable and better funded areas, which also facilitates their career opportunities. The lack of interest can also be connected to the changes in the academic profession. With more academics struggling to

secure permanent and full-time positions, individuals might focus more on research and teaching in areas that will help their career prospects. While Orr (2004) acknowledges changes in the academic profession, he suggests that academics need to be bold and challenge global problems, in order to ensure that man-made disasters and issues are not spiralling out of control through people's behaviour.

The lack of engagement could stem from a lack of relevant information or even understanding of the concept and its impact. Fiselier *et al.* (2018) argue that a low engagement and resistance to involve individual academics stems from a lack of knowledge, or misconception of SD. Another frequently mentioned issue refers to a lack of understanding of the relevance of SD to one's own academic research area (Boks and Diehl, 2006; Down, 2006; Huckle, 1996; Leal-Filho, 2000; Littledyke *et al.*, 2013; Weybrecht, 2015). Alternatively, individuals might be willing to take part in SD activities, but do not know how to contribute and where to start, and therefore need some guidance to start engaging (Roberts and Roberts, 2008).

Roberts and Roberts (2008) go as far as suggesting that SD advocates themselves still work in silos, which hinders the exchange and transfer of relevant knowledge and SD practice. This view is supported by Louw (2017), who points out that working in isolation is often not a choice, in particular where organisational and peer support for SD initiatives is missing. Louw's research focuses on academics who act as PRME enthusiasts or champions and who's work includes notions of emotional labour, which shows a high involvement in their work undertaken and that can negatively impact self-esteem, motivation, resilience and mental health as individuals are often required to continuously challenge the status quo (Louw, 2017). While small-scale, Louw's research highlights another reason of academics working solitarily or what appears to be in silos. Both academics reflect the view of Weybrecht (2015) who emphasises existing issues of collaborating and engaging even across departments and subject areas in business schools.

As mentioned above, HEIs tend to be conservative and their traditional views and complex organisational structures often prevent the implementation of changes. ESD also challenges existing teaching methods and concepts, specifically in business and management that students have been exposed to for years preaching them to be profit oriented (Lozano, 2006). Many academics have been taught different concepts and theories during their studies and now struggle to understand and incorporate a new and alien concept into their fields of research, which on top requires the collaboration across different departments that was previously not necessary (Alabaster and Blair, 1996). Age in particular can be a concern in academics who attended HE before the concept of SD found its way into the mainstream of research and governmental agendas (Alabaster and Blair, 1996; Huckle, 1996). On top of engagement in

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research, teaching and often external projects, academics tend to lack time to engage with additional tasks, which can add to their existing workload. Hence, the focus tends to be on their research interest and the existing curriculum content.

Despite academic literature continuously highlighting the significance of individuals in ESD implementation, there appears to be a gap in how the potential of individuals can be fully utilized. More recent research however, shows an increase in publications on academics, their role and support opportunities, as seen specifically in a special issue dedicated by the 'International Journal for Sustainability in Higher Education'.

It is crucial to have engaged and passionate employees. Academics link the strategic plan of a University with the ultimate outcome in providing students with the curricular content. However, academic staff as a main driver in introducing or pushing ESD also bears the risk that academic institutions rely solely on these individuals. Although individual initiatives can work (Alabaster and Blair, 1996), "sustainability is somewhat vulnerable to the loss of those key staff" (Brammer *et al.*, 2012 : 25). Engaging more staff and sparking their interest is therefore necessary to prevent the loss of dedicated employees. It also helps individual academics in engaging with SD and confidently pass their knowledge on to students (Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008).

Turning gatekeepers into supporters requires utilising the initiative of existing advocates and the further development of academics in the field of sustainability (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013), as well as their support in order to avoid demotivation and isolation of engaged staff (Down, 2006). Hence, putting ESD into practice requires the backing of research and teaching staff. As Ryan & Tilbury (2013) point out "to truly shift higher education systems involves challenging every educator to consider their responsibility and contribution to shaping the world through both formal and informal learning" (Ryan & Cotton, 2013; Tilbury, 2013).

Supporting individuals requires also the provision of resources such as funding, time, as well as support in terms of learning and development opportunities for staff to engage and familiarise themselves with new concepts. Learning and development has been highlighted continuously in publications (Alabaster and Blair, 1996) and will be looked at more closely in section 2.6. Further support can be provided through teaching material, recognising individuals work undertaken, and helping individuals to ease the overwhelming scale of the change process (Thomas, 2004).

Recognising and fostering academics' work is in particular valuable where enthusiasts are involved in ESD integration in order to avoid demotivation and exhaustion. Louw (2017) for example undertook a study on the engagement of PRME champions in various UK business schools, and emphasises the high intensity of emotional labour that goes with the integration of the UNPRME and that proves rather daunting for academics.

Potential measures to motivate and engage academics can be taken in terms of incentives and rewards, in order to assure staff that their work is being recognised and acknowledged (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013) such as through the provision of time (Fiselier *et al.*, 2018). This can be done by providing academics with more time to familiarise themselves with SD or the allocation of funding. A lack of resources can otherwise present a challenge to convince academics to take on an interest in a new area like SD, considering the pressure and stress to teach and deliver high quality publications. However, there is also a belief that it is not only a question of rewarding, but also sanctioning in order to move to more serious measures of SD integration (Carteron *et al.*, 2014).

Various resources have become available for academics to supplement their learning and teaching material such as through the EAUC<sup>24</sup>, Vlearn<sup>25</sup> or the Sustainability Literacy Test (referred to as Sulitest)<sup>26</sup>, and provide a platform to build networks with others in the field. Additionally, an increased number of publications and specialist journals have facilitated research and teaching on SD. Nevertheless, researchers such as Acevedo (2012) show some concern on the accuracy and correct interpretation of some material. In an analysis of a number of management text books that included ethics in its contents, it was found that the majority of the literature lacked the correct understanding of relevant ethical concepts and understandings, hence, this risks the teaching of wrong content to students and a misinterpretation of knowledge by lecturers (Acevedo, 2012).

The above criticism refers specifically to business lecturers who are not familiar with concepts like ethics and lack the philosophical background to provide students with the multifaceted dimensions of ethics, morality and other relevant aspects. In light of the many debates and complexities of SD and other related concepts such as CSR, Corporate Governance and others, it might not be surprising if Acevedo's findings might correlate across various areas related to sustainability. But even where lecturers are familiar with the content, finding the right material

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<sup>24</sup> In terms of learning and teaching material some guidance, information, and resources can be attained through different channels and databases that have been created to assist academics, such as through the EAUC (2018c). Furthermore, academics can also use the platform provided to exchange and share knowledge and experiences and take part in various training courses offered (EAUC, 2018b).

<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, VLearn (2014) provides video based content to business and management students and academics alike that can be utilised in lectures.

<sup>26</sup> Another useful resource that can be used to test the knowledge of students and University staff alike is the Sustainability Literacy Test that aims to provide participants with a minimum level of knowledge on Sustainability (Décamps *et al.*, 2017; Kedge Business School, 2014).

can prove difficult. Aragon-Correa *et al.* (2017) point towards the sheer complexity and interconnectedness of sustainability with many business education areas, making it difficult to find relevant but also appropriate material.

On top of financial aid and teaching material, communicating efforts and success stories and sharing information to provide a better picture of the changes planned, is a key to be successful and motivate staff (Malhadas, 2003). It will keep employees informed of the actions taken and can motivate them to be a part and engage with the change efforts. Empowerment of staff as well as all other stakeholders should be a given to make them part of the change process (Littledyke *et al.*, 2013; Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008; Reid, 1995). Making individuals a part of the transformation, can promote the changes taking place and enthuse academics to drive the change process. This can be done by developing their knowledge and skillset in order to become more confident to engage in ESD activities, which is a crucial step in integrating SD into HE curricula (Ceulemans and De Prins, 2010; Holmberg *et al.*, 2008; Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008; Thomas and Nicita, 2002) or by using their existing knowledge to involve them actively in the change process (House and Watson, 1995).

How exactly staff can be trained or contribute to ESD integration has not been specified further by any author. However, it has been highlighted that supporting academics who champion the ESD agenda and their work undertaken, can lead to positive experiences in integrating SD and the facilitation of those who are heavily invested in this role (Holdsworth and Thomas, 2015; Louw, 2017).

## 2.5 Systemic Change and Social Learning in ESD Integration

The following section discusses change in HE, universities struggles to adapt to alterations and the sectors complexity. Furthermore, the two key theories that underpin this thesis are presented and discussed, systemic change and social learning. Systemic change was chosen due to its long-term outlook and the inclusion of complexities in change processes. Not only is ESD an intricate concept, but its integration into a convoluted university structure highlights that change has to be approached from a systemic perspective, if any alterations are to be integrated and sustained in the long-term. Other approaches are evaluated (see section 2.5.3) such as organisations as 'organisms' or 'flux and transformation', but these do not provide the aforementioned characteristics required to tackle the complex, systemic and farsighted nature that is ESD in HE. Learning is an important factor in change processes. Social learning was therefore chosen due to its links to complex change processes and the need to include everyone involved in learning in

order to successfully implement change (see section 2.5.5). Ultimately, both key underpinning theories are required to analyse ESD in a HE context and academics' learning.

### 2.5.1 Change in Higher Education

Implementing ESD in business schools (not just across the UK) and preparing graduates to make responsible business decisions are good intentions, and academia is well under way to increase its activities. Research into SD and ESD respectively has considerably increased in the past two decades and various case studies have been undertaken and publications have circulated in the academic arena (e.g. Ferrer-Balas *et al.*, 2009; Fiselier *et al.*, 2018; Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018; Lidgren *et al.*, 2006; Lozano-García *et al.*, 2009; Lozano, 2006; Weybrecht, 2015). Equally, a variety of stakeholder groups such as staff, students, funding and governmental bodies and others are engaging with ESD and cross boundary initiatives have emerged, allowing it to develop as a concept<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, activities and efforts relating to ESD are not evenly distributed and need further attention (UNESCO, 2012), as they have largely been disappointing and not met expectations set out in past declarations (Bekessy *et al.*, 2003). The criticism refers to HEIs that have signed sustainability declarations and lag behind putting concrete goals into action, have failed to deliver requirements set out in agreements or use declarations as a means of window dressing (see section 2.2.3).

Change is often inevitable and with technological advances companies and other organisations, but also individuals are expected to react even quicker to external events and internal decision making, by forming appropriate decision-making strategies, now than a few decades ago. Change can relate to "any alteration to the status quo" (Bartol and Martin, 1998: 252-253), or in an organisational context "new ways of organising and working" (Dawson, 2003b: 16), which can refer to any changes taking place in an organisation. Managing alterations in an organisation requires attention to all participants involved in the process therefore, the definition of Hughes (2006: 4) is favoured that change management refers to "attending to organisational change

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<sup>27</sup> One example is the establishment of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) network that allows HEIs, students and non-education organisations with an interest in ESD to connect, interact and share knowledge, as well as offering relevant training to members (see EAUC, 2018a). Further initiatives are People and Planet, a student network that campaigns for various sustainability issues and publishes the Green League Table that ranks universities and their sustainable actions (see People & People and Planet, 2014a).

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transition processes at organisational group and individual levels". The definition includes all actors involved and rather than managing the process and people, it suggests the involvement with all participants and their inclusion in the transition.

Change can unfold in various ways and can be looked at in terms of how it arises, its pace and scale (Todnem By, 2005). The occurrence of change can be viewed from a planned approach, as outlined in various famous models that produce planned steps, or phases organisations go through<sup>28</sup> or emerge suddenly (Todnem By, 2005). However, the planned approach has been criticised to fall short of dealing effectively with sudden and large-scale changes as it focuses on small change initiatives (Burnes, 1996; Burnes, 2004), but also treating conditions and stakeholders as constant and predictable, potentially disregarding complex and more dynamic interactions of stakeholders and problems that can arise (Bamford and Forrester, 2003). The emergent approach is therefore, seen by some as more appropriate as it sees change as a continuous process that takes many variables in an organisation into consideration and constantly works on adapting the change situation (Burnes, 1996; Burnes, 2004; Dawson, 2003a), much like SD that is characterised by complexity and a long-term view. Others in turn (Dunphy and Stace, 1993) combine both ways and view change from a contingency perspective that sees change as unique to each organisation. Nevertheless, this approach is criticised to lack managerial control and suggests that "managers do not have any significant influence and choice over situational variable and structures" (Burnes, 1996: 377). Change can also be categorised in terms of its occurrence of either happening incrementally or discontinuously or by its scale (Todnem By, 2005).

In the realm of HE, change becomes ever more complex as Universities are generally characterised as institutions that are resistant to change (Clark, 2004; Weber, 2012). The reason is their complex structure consisting of a multitude of different subject areas and cultures, the cooperation with external organisations such as funding bodies, and also the influence and interest of individual academics that can lead to internal power struggles (see Alabaster and Blair, 1996; Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005; Weber, 2012). The last point in particular is highlighted

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<sup>28</sup> Lewin's model looks at three steps that organisations go through in making changes unfreeze, move and refreeze (Lewin, 1951). Unfreeze identifies the present situation and changes required, including resistance factors, the move step then implements change, by also involving individuals, and refreeze focuses on making the change stick through support and rewards. Much like Lewin's three-steps, the four-phase model includes distinct phases that organisations go through, exploration, planning, action and integration (Bullock and Batten, 1985). Kotter (1995) suggests his eight-stage model that emphasises the importance of communication throughout all stages.

as an issue by Leal Filho *et al.* (2018) in connection with traditional systems of tenure and academic freedom that contribute to the lack of willingness to change. Other issues relate to “complicated governance structures, multiplying streams of income, a changing array of base units that stake out different academic territories, [and] a developing set of contradictory beliefs” (Clark, 2004: 6) and ‘micro politics’ given the many groups of people and disciplines involved (Scott, 1999: 16). The various influencing factors mentioned, additionally complicate ESD curricula integration due to lengthy and bureaucratic processes in HE (Weybrecht, 2015).

Universities are often influenced by long-standing traditions (Lozano, 2006) and practices (Clark, 2004), that can clash with innovations such as SD and the various cultures in an institution, mainly due to the separate ways that departments within Universities have developed and secluded themselves from other disciplines by also each pursuing their own agenda (Weber and Hirsch, 2002). As Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt (2005: 76) point out resistance is to be expected across institutions as “the University is a knowing organisation – which makes it hard to transform it into a learning one”. This does not suggest that all institutions are reluctant to change, as there are examples of Universities that have embraced and successfully managed changes within the HE sector in the past few decades<sup>29</sup>. However, the complexities and politics present complicate change processes (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2018), most notably large scale transformations. In addition, change in educational contexts and even the terminology used such as sustaining or sustainability is nothing new (Clark, 2004; Scott, 1999). The HE sector has seen widespread changes not least through an increase in student numbers and tuition fees, a decrease in public funding, a greater number of competition and increase in Universities and the integration of polytechnics within the HE system, while salaries have stayed the same (see Greenaway and Haynes, 2003; Marginson, 2017). Furthermore, a decline in funding from key bodies such as HEFCE, HEA and others, has led to a drop in support for ESD initiatives such as the Green Academy Programme (Fiselier *et al.*, 2018).

However, as Clark (2004) points out, it is in particular traditional Universities that encounter resistance issues, as opposed to newer institutions that have been governed under a more managerial leadership. Furthermore, HEIs enjoy the privilege of academic freedom that allows them to pursue research and teaching freely. This is highlighted in the Magna Charta Universitatum, a document published by the EUA (European University Association) in

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<sup>29</sup> An HEIs that is committed to SD and ESD and has led University wide change is the University of Gloucester. Further details on the institutions contributions to ESD can be found at <https://sustainability.glos.ac.uk/>.

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collaboration with the University of Bologna (EUA, 1988). The document acknowledges the responsibilities of Universities in society, but also emphasises the autonomy necessary, as well as the significance of collaborations across Universities (EUA, 1988). Difficulties in traditional Universities to address SD could then be connected to a more distinct culture of academic freedom more prevalent in older institutions.

Considering that the HE sector has undergone major funding cuts and had to open other income streams, it also highlights the influence of funding bodies and corporations that invest in research, and exacerbates debates around academic freedom. Nevertheless, ESD depicts a fundamental shift in the way Universities operate, and it requires institutions to challenge what they stand for (Tilbury, 2011). Although referring to the concept of entrepreneurial Universities Clark (2004: 7), emphasises that “Universities cannot stand still or retreat into the past. Change is inevitable”.

Such a transformation can raise issues because of the complex structure of HEIs and the aspect of academic freedom that sets academia apart from any other profession. However, looking at the marketisation of HE that has taken place over the years and more business like operations to ensure funding and fight off competitors, one could argue academic freedom has already been compromised (Martin-Sardesai *et al.*, 2017).

In light of the complexity of HEIs, any change efforts therefore have to take the unique nature of academia and each particular organisational context into consideration, showing flexibility and adapting to the situational context and circumstances of an institution at any given time (Scott, 1999). Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt (2005) support this view, suggesting that any change processes in HEIs need to be inclusive of the messy and often contradicting ideas, traditions and views prevalent in HE. The intricate relationships and mechanisms inherent in organisations therefore connect best to the emergent change approach.

### 2.5.2 Resistance to Change

No matter how well change is planned, it is not necessarily well received by all stakeholders of an organisation. It can be described as “the source of all human progress and all human pain”, as it can transform and innovate organisations, but also generate tensions among stakeholder groups that have objections towards alterations (Page 1998, quoted in Hughes, 2006: 1). In a research study of more than 100 companies Kotter (1995) found that most change efforts of the firms he researched failed because resistance, appropriate planning, and time among other factors were not taken into consideration appropriately. Lozano (2006) agrees with this view emphasizing that

problems ESD integration encounters, mainly relate to the barriers that are stopping it from a long-term succession and suitable ways to overcome them. Barriers are versatile and can all either hinder or push the shift towards the implementation of ESD (see section 2.4). Whatever the challenges encountered Leal Filho *et al.* (2018) note that recognising barriers helps to anticipate and plan an appropriate integration strategy.

There seems to be an overall belief that resisting change is a negative issue in change management and that it is “counterproductive – even irrational – behaviour which needs to be overcome” (King and Anderson, 2002: 10). A better understanding of issues including individual’s resistance can help HEIs make better decisions and should therefore not necessarily be seen as something negative (Hughes, 2006). Rather than approaching resistance negatively, critical views should be embraced and utilised to improve and progress within the process, while giving people the opportunity to communicate their tensions and contribute to the process (see Hughes, 2006; Waddell and Sohal, 1998). In a critical analysis on common views on resistance to change Thomas and Hardy (2011) note that neither a for or against approach is helpful, as both do not take power struggles into consideration that can occur among stakeholders involved in the process.

Whatever the reason for an organisation to undertake small or even substantive changes, there will always be individuals or groups that are not comfortable with alterations of the status quo. Resistance is an important issue that is crucial to a change process as it cannot be avoided, and resisting factors should ideally be determined before attempting to change an existing situation (Lozano García *et al.*, 2006). Being aware of the barriers and drivers when planning change is therefore essential in determining its outcome. In addition, it is important to understand why individuals and groups neglect change in order to resolve or even prevent issues from happening.

Reasons why individuals or groups are reluctant to new ideas can be manifold, but one of the main factors is related to fear. Graetz *et al.* (2002, in Hughes, 2006) point out that it is less a fear of change but rather one of losing something. As change requires individuals to face a new or even an unexpected future state, the loss of a job or change of the job role, or even a shift of power relations, could drive this fear (Dawson, 2003b). Change as such is something that individuals identify themselves with by asking what is happening to them as part of the process, regardless where the change happens. Kotter (1995) identifies this as parochial self-interest, as individuals or groups think about their own personal good. Additionally, resistance can occur through a lack of understanding the need to change, mistrust in the proposed alterations by senior management (Dawson, 2003b), a fear of not being able to cope with new expectations or being pulled out of an environment that employees have gotten comfortable with, having a different view on proposed alterations or even a general animosity towards any changes (see

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Eccles, 1994, in Dawson, 2003). However, Waddell and Sohal (1998) believe that reasons go beyond self-interest and are more complex than previously assumed relating to 'rational', 'non-rational', 'political' and 'management factors', all relating to individuals' own and organisational contexts.

Whatever change strategy is proposed, it is crucial to be aware that a new idea can be turned down at any stage of a change process (Kotter, 2012; Lozano, 2006). In order to work towards a better implementation of changes, Dawson (2003b: 20) highlights soft measures that can be used by senior management such as "participation, communication and support" in order to involve and empower employees, or hard measures focusing on "negotiation, manipulation, and coercion" in order to deal with more difficult resistance factors. Participation can also be extended to a consultation level, whereby the expertise of academics and other ESD enthusiasts is used to engage individuals and make them a more active part of the change process (House and Watson, 1995). As highlighted in a recent study, many of the participating business schools identified a group of enthusiasts across their institutions that actively promoted ESD (Fiselier *et al.*, 2018).

An important aspect of managing change is to clearly communicate to stakeholders what is happening and why, and to keep them informed about changes. According to Kotter (1995:64) communication should take place in as many ways and levels of an institution as possible to capture people's attention and keep the momentum up, including senior figures who 'walk the talk', so lead the way with the message that they convey. By exemplifying the vision of a University, leaders can then use enthusiastic staff members to spread the word within different groups or faculties of HEIs. In addition, support by the organisation needs to be continuous if individual motivation is to be kept up (Scott, 1999).

Time is also an important factor in change processes that is often overlooked or underestimated. Change takes time and resistance can happen at any stage within a process of transformation (Kotter, 2012). Integrating SD and ESD is seen as a time intense task (Kotter, 2012; Tilbury, 2011), one that will also consist of trial and error runs or learning-by-doing practices, as it is not just a relatively new but also multi-layered concept (Schein, 1993). Hence, tailoring the strategy to any organisation's overall situation, as mentioned above, and involving employees is of utmost importance, in order to work towards resistance factors before taking more stringent measures to get employees to concur with changes. Some authors suggest that timing is critical in supporting individuals and should happen as early as possible (Huberman and Miles, 1984). While it is the most difficult time to implement changes, people are also more receptive to help and advice. However, time is scarce for academics who are involved in teaching, research, and possibly other

activities, and support could include time off to engage with ESD or create incentive and reward structures to motivate them and allow academics to become familiar with the process.

While any change demands the involvement of support groups, the connection of HE and its complexity coupled with a young and still developing concept that is widely debated, is bound to generate conflict on all levels and among various stakeholder groups, possibly to an even greater extent than within other organisations.

### 2.5.3 Systemic Change

In order to understand how organisations approach change it is useful to know how these function. This can be done by looking at organisations through the lens of metaphors such as organisations as machines, organisms, political systems or flux and transformation as proposed by Morgan (1997). The machine metaphor refers to more mechanistic and bureaucratic organisations, designed in a way that each part fulfils a purpose, with change usually driven by senior management and resistance seen as manageable. The political system metaphor relates to aspects of power and conflict in organisations, with change requiring constant negotiations and coalition building. The organism metaphor looks at organisations as interrelated parts and incorporates all individuals and groups within it, with changes seen as something that can be anticipated when individuals and groups are prepared and supported<sup>30</sup>. However, this metaphor assumes an interest and motivation to tackle change, clearly lacking to consider the inherent complexity and different interests and resistance factors (Cameron and Green, 2015). Flux and transformation refers to organisations that are seen as a natural part of the environment. However, change is not something that managers can manage or that can be anticipated, with conflict and tensions arising as part of the process (Cameron and Green, 2015).

While metaphors can help provide some understanding of organisations, their use can restrict a more comprehensive view of firms (Morgan, 1997) by neglecting the complexity of organisations and influencing factors. Furthermore, no one approach fits any organisation perfectly, with many linking to multiple metaphors, rather than just one (Cameron and Green, 2015). Hence,

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<sup>30</sup> The organism metaphor implies that systems can adapt to any external changes and organisational systems can be designed to fit their environments by working and communicating well across departments and units. While this metaphor presents an ideal and harmonious view of organisations, it neglects the everyday realities and complexities in organisational systems.

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connecting organisations to single metaphors can limit how organisations are viewed and understood. HEIs in particular, show characteristics that overlap with various metaphors, including traditional and complex structures, which can link to the machine and political system metaphor, as well as flux and transformation given the continuous adaption of changes that Universities are going through.

How organisations should approach change and tools required are widely debated in change management literature (Burnes, 2004). There is an array of models, processes, and ready-made solutions organisations are advised to follow, in order to successfully drive change as preached by management consultants. Different models and approaches have emerged depicting steps, phases, or processes that deal with change. Many such models, as briefly discussed above, fall into the category of planned change for example the three-step (Lewin, 1951), the eight-step (Kotter, 1995) or the four-phase model (Bullock and Batten, 1985)<sup>31</sup>. Others look at change as a process that requires the alignment of various, if not all, parts of an organisation for change to be successful (Nadler and Tushman, 1997; Senge, 2006). In turn, change is also looked at from an organisational perspective of flux and transformation and the complexity in organisations and change in today's world (Shaw, 2003; Stacey, 2003). Although this links with complex transformations that cannot necessarily be planned, one weakness here is that managers cannot control the change process (Cameron and Green, 2015).

While some change models take complexity or a long-term approach into consideration (see flux and transformation or systemic change), most do not and merely look beyond outcomes and the short-term (Cameron and Green, 2015). In this respect, change is often perceived as having a beginning and end, can be planned and controlled and include prevailing misconceptions that organisational variables such as drivers and barriers are constants that do not change (Barth, 2013). The quick fix approach is seen in various models mentioned above that have a beginning

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<sup>31</sup> The three-step model links with the machine and organism metaphors and is a straightforward approach, but risks reverting to old habits and ways of operating if the third step is not focused on (Cameron and Green, 2015). Kotter's 'Eight-Step Model' on the other hand links with the machine, organism, and political metaphors and incorporates eight steps to implementing change processes. In comparison to Lewin's three steps, it is more detailed and highlights the importance of constant communication and the power of vision and persuasion in order to grow the followers needed to drive the required change (Cameron and Green, 2015).

and an end, with change seen as linear and the assumption that it can be managed or controlled when using prescribed models. Considering that, many organisations fall into various categories of metaphors, and change is more intricate and unforeseen, simple recipes offered for complex change by management consultants are questionable.

Even though there is more advise and information on how to initiate and put change into practice, according to Burns and Jackson (2011), change strategies implemented largely still fail. One reason, is that approaches lack interdisciplinarity and are mainly focusing on change from within the area of expertise of researchers, thus, concluding that there is no “approach to change that is theoretically holistic, universally applicable, and which can be practically applied at present” (Burnes and Jackson, 2011: 3). While this could be attributed to a lack of agreement on concepts and frameworks that actually work (Burnes, 2004; Guimaraes and Armstrong, 1998), some (Doyle, 2002; Edmonstone, 1995) argue that much of what has been published lacks rigour and evidence. Nevertheless, there is never a guarantee that a change strategy will work out successfully due to the dynamic nature of change (Dawson, 2003b).

Directions given by researchers and consultants therefore, can serve as a guide but need to be put into each organisation’s context, as these can vary greatly and change altogether over time (Hughes, 2006). A change process in one organisation is not identical to another organisations’ and cannot be recreated from past experiences, as the situation a firm is in can change. There is no one size fits all solution or recipe for success, and change management strategies have to simply be tailored to any organisation’s needs. It is also important to note that people interpret changes in different ways, and each change has to be altered to the individual state an organisation is in at the time the alteration is being undertaken.

A sustainable approach in dealing with complex transformations is that of systemic change that looks to environmental systems and their interconnectedness, to guide understanding of organisations and all parts involved (Senge *et al.*, 1999). Hence, change should be approached from the perspective of biologists rather than managers (Senge, 1997). This resonates with Hurth (2017) who suggests the need for organisations to view them themselves as part of a system, reflect on their purpose and apply integrated thinking. While referring to businesses, these concepts can be applied to HEIs too and their many stakeholders

Intricate changes like SD necessitate a “fundamental shift in thinking” (Senge, 2006:10), a process that is associated with systemic thinking. Sanneh (2018: 6) defines systemic thinking as “the ability to think about a system as a whole, rather than only considering the parts individually”. Another definition is that of Wals *et al.* (2009: 7) who define systems thinking as “seeing connections, relating functions to one another, making use of diversity and creating synergy”. Systems thinking,

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and ultimately systemic change, is about linking different parts and issues in order to understand their interconnections.

Taking a whole systems view is argued to not only advance knowledge and foster understanding (Flood, 2001), but in an academic sense also shifts from isolated research to interdisciplinary research and collaborations, that allow a more comprehensive understanding of causes and how these affect various parts of a system (King *et al.*, 2000; in Sanneh, 2018). However, change of this proportion goes beyond SD teaching and implies a cultural change in HEIs, one that needs deep learning from all individuals and groups involved in order to be transformative (Sterling, 2004, in Corcoran & Wals, 2004), which will be discussed in the next sections.

Scott (1999: 18) points out that “educational changes do not unfold spontaneously – they have to be led”. Therefore, it is necessary to see the big picture and understand how all different factors influence educational contexts and shape the change process. Hence, rejecting change management models that promise a quick fix (Scott, 1999: 23-24). Given the complexities of both, HEIs and the concept of SD, change needs to be adaptable and challenges and resistance factors are to be seen as part of the process. Senge (2006: 6) proposes that long-term and fundamental changes like SD require us to make inherent changes to our thinking and behaviour in order to avoid the same outcomes and therefore reminds us to “think less like managers and more like biologists”. Focusing on issues and embracing these is necessary in order to integrate SD. In other words “the more profound the change in strategy, the deeper must be the change in thinking” (Senge and Sterman, 1992: 1007).

The very nature of creating sustainable change, by focusing on the interconnectedness and the long-term, is what makes systemic change the most appropriate approach to integrating ESD into HEIs, compared to planned change approaches that often focus on the short-term, single and less intricate change (Cameron and Green, 2015). Furthermore, ESD challenges the status quo in education and encourages a new way of thinking, an aspect that correlates with systemic change as a long-term process that actively looks at “redesigning and rethinking change” (Cameron and Green, 2015: 124).

Compared to other models that provide quick fixes to change, systemic change does not prescribe solutions but rather provides guidelines organisations can follow: “start small, grow steadily, don’t plan the whole thing, expect challenges – it will not go smoothly!” (Cameron & Green, 2015: 124). While not prescriptive, this approach allows organisations to be flexible and move at their own pace. Nevertheless, as Cameron and Green (2015) point out, the biggest issue for systemic change is in expectations to making quick decisions, performance and short-term gains purported in our society, which clearly conflicts with the long-term approach in systemic change.

As with other organisations, Universities and their multi-faceted structures and different cultures require an institutionally focused strategy too. However, the complexities that HEIs bring with them, complicates the change process even more. Nevertheless, some factors can aid in easing struggles such as embracing the change process from the management and leadership team, supporting individuals to counteract fatigue or a decrease in motivation, effective communication as well as understanding that the benefits outweigh the costs (Scott, 1999). Fiselier *et al.* (2018) support this view and emphasise the importance leadership plays in drawing up and promoting a ESD strategy, that further percolates throughout the whole institution.

In addition to adapting change models to HEIs' contexts, involvement of key individuals in driving the process is required. Some important aspects relate to preparation and planning, more specifically knowing about the challenges that change can bring about, but also knowing the people in an organisation. Scott (1999: 18) points out that "right from the outset the driving force of change is people- their motives, histories, learned ways of behaving, perceptions and relationships", which requires taking their concerns into consideration to implement change.

Rogers (2003) for instance proposes that individuals fall into certain adoption categories when innovations are introduced<sup>33</sup>, meaning individuals adopt changes differently and at different stages. Individuals should be identified who embrace change and can act as change agents. In a HE setting these individuals could be staff who engage in SD teaching and research, or the wider community, as well as students' who interact in societies and campaigns among others. Although Roger's model focuses on innovation rather than change, it can still be useful to understand individuals' ability to adapt to new ideas and situations<sup>34</sup>.

Systemic change promotes and supports a learning by doing and trying what works best mentality (Weybrecht, 2015), by continuously adapting the change process, and taking the organisational conditions and context into account. Hence, it encourages to take risks and use strategies that have not been tried before. Senge *et al.* (2007) point out that systemic change is not easy and can

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<sup>33</sup> His model shows that only a small number of individuals can be classified as "Innovators", so the number of individuals who are adventurous enough to try a new innovation like change agents or champions. These are followed by "Early adopters" who are key in promoting the new idea and motivate others. The Early adopters are the change agents, the individuals who facilitate and support the adoption of a new idea and who should be identified to drive the process. They are crucial in sparking the interest of the "Early Majority, followed by the more resistant "Late Majority" and the most resistant group the "Laggards", who might or might not be convincible.

<sup>34</sup> Often confused, innovation and change have separate meanings. An innovation can refer to the "introduction of specific new practices, methods of work or pieces of technology", whereas change has a much wider context covering a process that can incorporate several innovations (Smale, 1998: 19)

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be chaotic. However, it also focuses on providing support to those that work on change initiatives on top of other activities (Cameron and Green, 2015).

Educational change in particular, requires a set of approaches that might even contradict each other, given the sector's complexities and interrelations of change across an institution as a whole (Scott, 1999). But rather than focusing overly on theoretical aspects, some authors (Clark, 2004; Scott, 1999) suggest that change needs to be put into practice and work has to be done on the ground in order to see how Universities are dealing with it. The concept of systemic change allows for, but also expects difficulties and encourages dealing with resistance factors, while trialling and testing what works best, hence making it a suitable change strategy for SD and ESD integration. While Scott and Clark's views support aspects of systemic change, theoretical and philosophical grounding of ESD research should not be overlooked as it is one of the criticisms of SD and ESD integration, in particular within case study research (Corcoran *et al.*, 2004; Fien, 2002).

Overall, Universities require not only "organisational will" (Clark, 2004: 4), but any transformation, ultimately comes down to each individual, because "everyone can be (and often is) a leader of change in their own area of expertise" (Scott, 1999: 171). One way of achieving the latter is through empowerment of academic (and support) staff to become leaders within their own departments and schools. Empowerment plays an important role when initiating and pursuing change across an individual and group level (Lambrechts *et al.*, 2017). Senge *et al.* (1999) agree with this view, and point out the necessity to identify the many key individuals who are leading change, rather than relying on one leader who drives change. Ultimately, "shared commitment to change develops only with collective capability to build shared aspirations" (Senge *et al.*, 1999: 9), which again, can be done through systems thinking. Herein lies a big mistake of organisations, that is to underestimate or lack understanding of learning and the skills needed (Senge *et al.*, 1999).

### 2.5.4 Change and the Importance of Learning

Learning is seen as a fundamental aspect of change (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010; Kotter, 2012; Schein, 1993; Senge, 2006), something that can be argued to be required in a life-long sense given the change of pace in the world. Whether big or small, change usually requires learning of something new, learning to adapt to other ways of working or even unlearning, all of which require time (Cameron and Green, 2015). Bateson (1972: 283) even suggests that "the word "learning" undoubtedly denotes change of some kind".

Buchanan and Huczynski (2010: 139) define learning as “the process of acquiring knowledge through experience which leads to a change in behaviour”. Learning takes place continuously and can be both, formal or informal (van Dam-Mieras, 2006: 14), although other authors refer to the latter as non-formal rather than informal (see Eraut, 2000). Formal learning refers to more planned and structured ways of learning such as by attending educational or developmental courses, while informal or non-formal learning relates to more ad-hoc opportunities such as networking, conferences etc.

Bateson (1972) views learning as an order, in which the higher the order the more profound the change is. This corresponds with others (Argyris, 1977a; Argyris and Schön, 1978; 1996) who point to single learning and double loop learning, with the latter signifying a higher degree of learning. While single loop learning refers to learning that supports the status quo of organisations, double loop learning requires individuals to question underlying assumptions, beliefs and values and leads to a change in behaviour and actions. Learning has become an important factor in strategy formation and it is argued to provide a competitive advantage (Senge, 2006; Starkey *et al.*, 2004), one that might decide on organisations’ future success and survival. Porter even acknowledges organisations’ need to become more like universities in order to learn fast and stay competitive (1997, in Starkey *et al.*, 2004). This is interesting as Sterling (2004a: 51) points out that “higher education institutions are not primarily reflexive learning systems (learning organisations) but teaching and research systems” that provide first order learning rather than deep learning.

Learning is also closely linked to systemic change and its inclusion of diverse and complex environments, individuals and groups (Senge *et al.*, 2007; Sterling, 2004a), in particular double loop learning or deep learning (as termed by Sterling above) that requires deliberation and reflection to going beyond the status quo. Systemic change in turn links with the ‘emergent’ approach of change (see section 2.5.1), which incorporates the messy reality of today’s rapid and complex change, an approach that inherently links to learning and that is also known as ‘organisational learning’ (Burnes, 1996). ESD as a systemic change process then, requires more than just strategic and cultural changes, but “widespread and deep learning within the higher education community and by policy makers – and this has to both precede and accompany matching change in learning provision and practice” (Sterling, 2004a: 51). Thus, learning becomes

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essential in organisations in tackling SD and ESD respectively and requires a shift to becoming a learning organisation<sup>36</sup> (Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007).

A learning organisation is a “metaphor with its roots in the vision of and the search for a strategy to promote individual self-development within a continuously self-transforming organization” (Starkey et al, 2004:2). This definition puts both, individuals and organisations, in the centre of learning in a changing environment. Individual learning is supported and aims to benefit both individuals and the organisation (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010). With respect to changing behaviours, a learning organisation can also be defined as “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (Senge, 2006: 14), suggesting that an organisation is adaptable and flexible in light of alterations. Hence, organisational learning is required within fast moving and changing environments (Senge and Sterman, 1992). In particular when put into a systemic process, advocates believe that learning is the most effective (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Schein, 2006).

In his seminal book ‘The Fifth Discipline’ Senge (2006: x) discusses aspects necessary to develop a learning organisation by “fostering aspirations, developing reflective conversation, and understanding complexity”. All three capabilities discussed, are supported by five disciplines that are necessary for a learning organisation: personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision, team learning and systems thinking, of which the latter connects all disciplines (Senge, 2006)<sup>37</sup>. To successfully use the disciplines Senge (2006) emphasises that all five need to develop simultaneously to create systemic change and any learning needs to be approached as an ongoing process as there is no such thing as excellence, as organisations will always be in a state of practicing their learning. ESD in particular is to be viewed as a learning process (Barth, 2013), considering its complexity and that of integrating it into complex institutional structures and systems, requiring ongoing re-evaluation and reflection of the process to integrating ESD.

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<sup>36</sup> Organisational learning should not be mistaken with a learning organisation. While the former refers to an organisation’s learning, the latter refers to organisations that are good at learning and embody an ideal institution that is effective in its learning (see Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2011; Tsang, 1997)

<sup>37</sup> Personal mastery refers to one’s own life-long learning. Mental models are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (Senge, 2006: 8). Additionally, these are to be questioned. Building a shared vision entails creating a common goal or identity that connects people.

## 2.5.5 Social Learning

The complexity in our world today requires organisations to alter operations and strategies frequently. Not only do these changes require individual and collaborative learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 2006), but learning from each other and “continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 2006: 3). However, despite a vast number of organisational learning literature, change and learning relating to SD is argued to have been largely neglected in research (Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007).

Social learning has been highlighted as a form of learning that is synonymous with fundamental change (Wals *et al.*, 2009) or organisational change (Barth, 2011: 29), as it suits systemic change processes and the complexities involved (Folke *et al.*, 2005; Hansmann, 2010; Kates *et al.*, 2001; Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007). As ESD requires change that is transformational in nature, social learning or societal learning as termed by Kates *et al.* (2001) is needed in order to contribute to a shift in HE (Hansmann, 2010).

The concept of social learning has developed across different disciplines and links to various strands of learning literature such as psychology, anthropology, biology, among others. Early work on the topic developed from the writings of Miller and Dollard (1941) and Bandura (1977) who looked at social learning in terms of individual learning by suggesting that learning took place through imitating others. Others (see Reed *et al.*, 2010; Wenger, 1999) however, contest this view by arguing that most learning is set in a social environment. Newer literature also focuses on social learning as a process in which individuals learn from each other and influence their wider environment (Reed *et al.*, 2010). The perspective has therefore not only shifted from individual learning to include multiple actors, but recent research now also incorporates organisations (White *et al.*, 2005)<sup>38</sup> as presented in the definitions below (Muro and Jeffrey, 2008). Further research that feeds into the developed of social learning are ‘experiential learning’ (Kolb, 1984), as well as ‘transformative’, ‘communicative’ and ‘instrumental learning’ (Mezirow, 1995).

Social learning can be defined as “collective action and reflection that occurs among different individuals and groups as they work to improve the management of human and environmental relations” (Keen *et al.*, 2005: 4). Others (Ison and Watson, 2007 [online]) view it as “achieving concerted action in complex and uncertain situations” or as “a process where different actors can

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<sup>38</sup> Newer literature on learning and organisations has been significantly influenced by writings of various researchers (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Argyris and Schön, 1996; Senge, 1997)

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deliberate and negotiate rules, norms and power relations" (Reed *et al.*, 2010: 5). While all three definitions focus on different factors or outcomes, they all emphasises the collaboration of different individuals and groups as part of social learning and imply a change through said learning.

The collaborative or participatory aspect is also mentioned by Wals *et al.* (2009) who compare social learning with a jazz orchestra, consisting of many different players, as its success invariably depends on each single individual. It therefore, not only involves individuals but also other groups and institutions as a whole. In this sense, learning occurs through all participants, and differences are embraced as part of the learning process (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012; Krasny and Lee, 2002; Wals *et al.*, 2009). Some (Keen *et al.*, 2005; Röling, 2002) go as far as saying that collaborations across disciplines in social learning are a requirement in order to learn from each other.

Wals *et al.* (2009: 11) highlight that social learning is about:

1. It is about learning from each other together
2. It is assumed that we can learn more from each other if we do not all think alike or act alike, in other words: we learn more in heterogeneous groups than we do in homogenous groups
3. It is about creating trust and social cohesion, precisely in order to become more accepting and to make use of the different ways in which people view the world
4. It is about creating 'ownership' with respect to both the learning process as well as the solutions that are found, which increases the chance that things will actually take place; and
5. It is about collective meaning making and sense making

Wals' description resonates with that of Schneider *et al.* (2009: 487) who propose four interlinked characteristics of social learning including "collaboration beyond traditional political tensions; an atmosphere of trust where [...] views and knowledge are taken seriously; communication and interaction beyond the knowledge systems to which the actors belong; and possibilities for creating and sharing tacit and explicit knowledge". This in turn links with Keen *et al.* (2005: 487), who emphasise the need to bring individuals and groups from different disciplines together as this can contribute to new knowledge and learning, which requires an approach that includes actors from different areas and disciplines, as learning otherwise continues to follow a business as usual approach. They further depict social learning as a braid that incorporates five strands, reflection, systems orientation, integration, negotiation and participation (Keen *et al.*, 2005).

The above understanding of social learning correlates with double loop learning/second order learning (Argyris, 1977b; 1990), “which demands reflection and deliberation on the relevance and tenability of underlying background theories and normative considerations” (Wals *et al.*, 2009: 11-12). There are further similarities to other forms of learning such as participatory learning, but according to Wals *et al.* (2009: 12) the difference here lies in the fact that “social learning processes are more about the softer results” and interactions between individuals interacting with each other. Conversely, Reed *et al.* (2010) suggest for social learning to take place it has to move on from an individual’s learning and manifest itself in the wider group or community where the learning is taking place. This suggests that rather than just interacting and participating, a change in understanding of a phenomenon must take place across the learning unit.

Social learning is increasingly used in business to facilitate change by engaging employees (Cramer and Loeber, 2007; Lund-Thomsen, 2007). However, Keen *et al.* (2005) argue that social learning has not been given enough attention in literature and by organisations yet. It is acknowledged though that social learning is not only the pre-requisite to work towards SD (Keen *et al.*, 2005) but also essential for the future success in organisations in today’s knowledge economy, in which most learning takes place through informal means (Wenger, 2000).

While the criticism above refers to environmental management, social learning has on a broader scale been extensively covered across literature from different fields that has also led to a lack of consensus on the concepts meaning (Blackmore, 2010; Pahl-Wostl *et al.*, 2007; Reed *et al.*, 2010). Reed *et al.* (2010) in particular argue that the concept of social learning is vague and does not differentiate between individual learning and that which happens in a wider context. Thus, its conceptual basis needs strengthening. Furthermore, it often focuses on outcomes and is associated with ‘pro environmental’ behaviour, which can be seen in Pahl-Wostl *et al.* (2007) who refer to social learning also as sustainable learning (Reed *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, the concept is also often mistaken with methods used or conditions required to fulfil social learning for example through participation (Reed *et al.*, 2010).

Learning does not happen overnight, but rather needs time to unfold (Senge *et al.*, 1999) as it involves processes of analysis and reflection (Schein, 2006). Vare and Scott (2007: 194) point out that learning must be seen as ongoing in ESD integration, one that first and foremost incorporates “a collaborative and reflective process” if we are to move from learning for to learning as

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Sustainable Development<sup>39</sup>. Learning to integrate SD has to take place on a daily basis and make use of various stakeholders involved, and address issues that arise in the process, by means of collaboration and exchange that might lead to a more resilient community (Wals *et al.*, 2009). Senge (2006: 10) concurs about the aspect of collaboration by stating that “unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn”. Single attempts to foster learning are therefore not best suited and proven to lack effectiveness (Scott, 1999). In this regard, ongoing support and opportunities for learning are necessary for ESD integration.

What drives these systems is the input, contribution and collaboration of all members of the group, no matter their individual differences, experiences and backgrounds (Wenger, 2000), hence working well with systemic change. However, participation does not automatically lead to social learning or is synonymous with it (Bull *et al.*, 2008). This view is supported by Schneider *et al.* (2009) who add that social learning might not take place at all. Reed *et al.* (2010) argue that social learning can even occur through social media or the right rewards and incentives that lead to question ones values and worldview and ultimately a change in behaviour. They also point out that homogenous groups are more likely to achieve outcomes of social learning compared to more diverse groups (Reed *et al.*, 2010). However, in transforming HE and integrating ESD it is rather unlikely that all stakeholders within a university, considering the complexities outlined above, share the same interests, thus making social learning a difficult task. Social learning is therefore, time consuming and intense and requires individuals to be open to a learning environment that embraces differences (Ljung and Gibbon, 2000).

While bringing people together to learn is not a guarantor for social learning, it has the potential to inspire learners to build relationships and allows knowledge creation and sharing. Research conducted by Schneider *et al.* (2009) for example show how a farming initiative used social learning to become more sustainable by creating connections across different stakeholder groups. Nevertheless, Cundill (2010) suggest that it is simplistic to assume that social learning occurs through interactions and connections and requires a better picture of the context and stakeholders within the process.

No matter how well thought out learning systems are, their success often comes down to the “collective goals and/or visions shared by those engaged in the process” (Wals *et al.*, 2009: 28).

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<sup>39</sup> In their article Vare and Scott (2007) make a distinction between two forms of ESD, highlighting a soft version (ESD 1) that promotes a basic set of learning and a more advanced ESD2 that requires learning on a deeper level and facilitates understanding the interdependencies.

While “organisations can take part in them [social learning systems]; they can foster them’; they can leverage them; but they cannot fully own or control them” (Wenger, 2000: 243). Ultimately, it requires an understanding of individuals motivation and challenges in participating in social learning (Krasny and Lee, 2002), but also individuals’ contributions, or as Senge *et al.* (1999: 26) point out “learning also depends on people’s choices. The first rule of learning is that learners learn best what learners want to learn”.

In order to foster and support social learning, the right conditions have to be created by putting appropriate systems in place that facilitate learning and flexibility to explore new ways of thinking and foster creativity among participants (Keen *et al.*, 2005; Pahl-Wostl *et al.*, 2007). Schneider *et al.* (2009) suggest starting social learning initiatives informally then slowly incorporate social learning into more formal learning within and across organisations. This resembles systemic change that develops slowly. Another factor in encouraging and supporting social learning is by using professional development and training that are highlighted as enablers for organisations to learn and also change (Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007) as discussed in the next section.

## 2.6 Learning and Development in Higher Education

Whilst more projects are funded, learning and teaching resources are available, and guidance and advice is given by different organisations and sustainability enthusiasts on SD aspects, not much appears in academic literature, on how academics acquire the relevant knowledge, or how Business Schools and Universities as a whole, support and train their staff to pass this knowledge on to students.

With a greater professionalisation of HE and a shift towards more business-like operations and the provision of services to students, learning and development (Holdsworth and Thomas, 2015; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013), as well as incentives and rewards have become an important aspect for Universities (Smith, 2004). How important learning and development is for ESD integration into HE show Martin *et al.* (2013: 1533) who claim that one of the biggest issues found in the effort to promote the DESD, is for academics and non-academics alike to understand the relevance of the project, along with previously mentioned issues on SD debates and its meaning. It often causes confusion and highlights the ignorance of staff who are either not familiar with the concept or simply not sure of how to incorporate it within their research area and teaching (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007). Difficulties to grasp the complexities of SD and how it works and relates to peoples’ work are not new. As mentioned before, students (Drayson *et al.*, 2012; Drayson *et al.*, 2013), policy

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makers and practitioners (Brammer *et al.*, 2012) alike are facing the same difficulties to understand the reasoning behind and the meaning of the concept of SD and ESD.

In the long run, how academic staff are trained and rewarded needs to change, with the necessary support structures in place to enable individuals to make changes (Cebrián *et al.*, 2015) within a working environment that is built on encouragement (Weybrecht, 2015). Scott (1999: 92-93) believes that professional development is essential in educational change and says that “change specific learning support is a distinguishing characteristic of educational organisations which are effective at managing ongoing improvement and innovation”.

Learning and development is also supported by Holdsworth and Thomas (2015) who argue that it is essential to change in HE. In their theoretical framework ‘Sustainability Education Academic Development’ (SEAD), the authors highlight three components required for ESD integration namely ‘organisational change’, ‘academic development’ and ‘sustainability education’. The first component ‘sustainability education’ requires academics to engage with, and reflect on, relevant knowledge and the connection to their own worldview, supported by double-loop learning. The second component ‘academic development’ is concerned with equipping educators with the necessary capacities and support engagement and reflection of their own practice. The third component ‘organisational change’ looks at an organisation, its structure, cultures and complexities to understand how change is dealt with. The overlap of all components is necessary to shape organisational development programmes by promoting critical thinking and reflection, as well as to transform learning in the context of ESD.

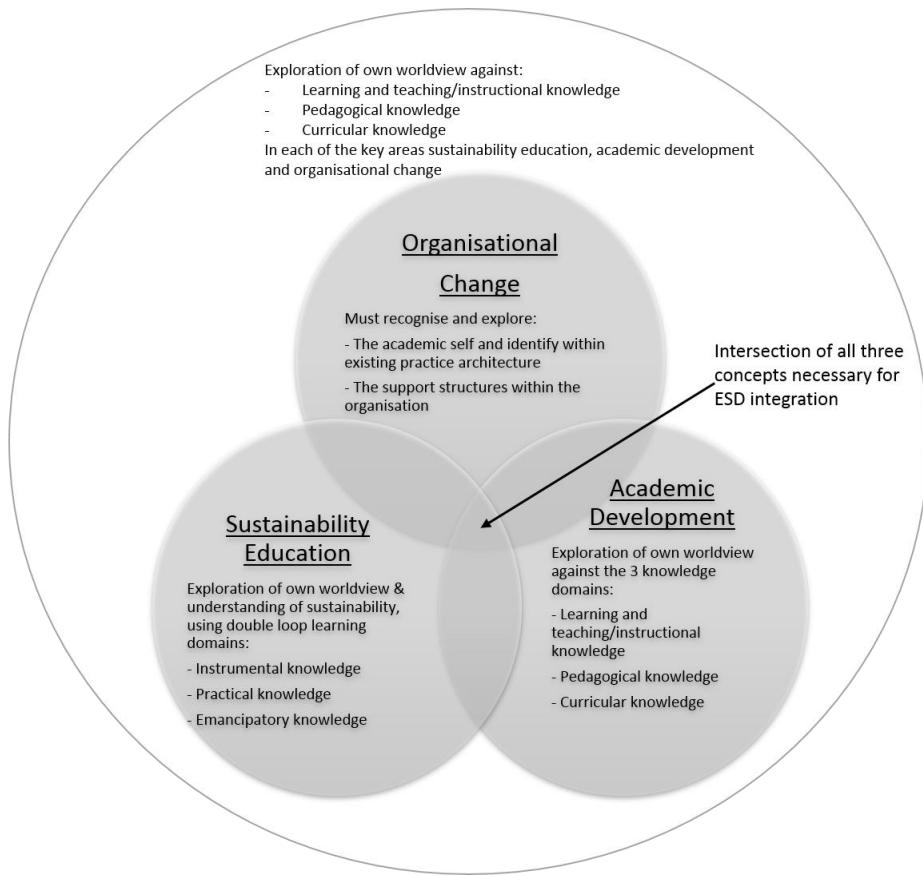


Figure 2.1 Sustainability Education Academic Development (SEAD)

Adapted from Holdsworth and Thomas (2015)

Against the backdrop of the framework (Holdsworth and Thomas, 2015) the case study research found that academics learned most successfully from fellow colleagues, and that academic development programmes were best situated in academic units rather than conducted through the University. However, issues identified were the continuation of these programmes due to their time restricted nature and further support provided to educators beyond dealing with interdisciplinary teams and the failure to achieve a deeper, more transformational level of learning in academics. Given that reflection and critical thinking of one's own teaching and actions is crucial in transformative learning, the process of learning and individual engagement can potentially be intense for academics or any individuals.

### 2.6.1 The Contested Nature of Professional Development in Higher Education

It has been highlighted that academic staff are vital in integrating SD into HE curricula, and that learning and development opportunities for academics therefore, need to be in place. Some go as

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far as to claim that “staff expertise is the most important asset in a University; without it literally nothing can be achieved” (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003: 23). Further reception can be found by House and Watson (1995: 8) who state that “there is much value to be retained in the motivation, self-image and practice of academic and other staff in our institutions”. These comments highlight the crucial part that staff in general hold in organisations. The value mentioned can relate to various outcomes such as staff loyalty, pride, motivation, identification with the employer but also an increase in turnover.

As mentioned in the previous section, not much is understood about academics enhancing their skill set and University initiatives and development programmes to support academics, due to a lack of research. Even less is known about support opportunities that HEIs are offering with regard to ESD. However, some case studies highlight the positive outcomes of professional development in the area of ESD. In addition, individuals interested in pushing the ESD agenda alongside the importance of development are frequently mentioned in articles, highlighting the importance of the topic.

A bigger picture of the changes in HE (see section 2.3.2) in the past few decades sheds some light on the issue of professional development and how it has developed across the University sector (see section 2.6.2). The historical developments and major legislation pieces further highlight how professional development has developed disproportionately across HE and its importance across Universities.

Given the nature of HE to teach and train future generations, or even develop future leaders, one might believe that learning and development is at the forefront of Universities to train their own staff. However, developing its own employees, whether support or academic staff, seems to be a rather unevenly distributed venture across institutions, as well as a relatively young field for HEIs (Clegg, 2003b). Furthermore, Holdsworth and Thomas (2015) point out that the complexities in HEIs, including culture and competing agendas, make it inherently difficult to initiate overall change. With the continuous changes that have taken place in HE over the past few decades and the higher market-orientation of Universities, learning and development has become more important in order to stay competitive within the sector. The link of ESD and professional development is also acknowledged by the ‘Staff and Education Development Association’ (SEDA), but further and ongoing measures and initiatives, are not emphasised beyond a specialist

publication and event (SEDA, n.d.)<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless, professional development generates different tensions across the HE sector that need further understanding, in order to place the need for learning and development opportunities within the debate.

## **2.6.2 Conceptual Issues of Professional Development**

Publications on professional development are widespread, however not with regard to HE, as learning and development at Universities has mainly developed through the marketisation of HE. Professional development has been often disregarded in HE and requires more attention as “for many managers, staff development as currently conceived is not a major contributor to organisational effectiveness” (Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003: xii). This view is not shared by McCaffery (2010) who claims that most Universities cover the aspects of professional development through dedicated departments or teams.

The subject matter of professional development is complex as it is dependent on each University and the emphasis placed on training staff. Wilkinson (1998) who advocates developing and training support staff in HE, highlights the differences, not only across the HE sector but also within individual Universities and different departments/schools. She further points out that appointed staff developers on a University level might operate on a different agenda than academic developers, who focus on academic staff, within different schools/units, often undertaking their own developments. This might even be exacerbated if there are no appointed academic developers within the schools, departments or units.

A closer look at existing literature on how academics develop their capabilities additionally unfolds various debates, mainly centred on defining the concept of professional development, the various meanings it conveys, as well as the different groups of staff that it comprises. There are many terms that are used besides professional development such as Continuing Professional Development (CPD), learning and development, staff training, staff development, organisational development, educational development or academic development that focuses particularly on academic staff. For the purpose of consistency and the previous use of the terms, ‘learning and development’ and professional development will predominantly be used. In the context of this

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<sup>40</sup> SEDA represents educational development staff in UK HEIs, and acknowledges the importance of professional development and ESD. Further information can be found on [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk).

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doctoral thesis, the focus lies primarily on the role of academics, whether they undertake teaching, researching or both.

A better understanding of the concept of professional development can be found in the definition of King (1998: 49) who broadly refers to it as “a significant tool in helping people to manage change”. Changes can be linked to training and developing staff to better cope with transformations Universities have gone through such as the changing technological advances or the integration of ESD respectively. A more narrow definition relates to the “structures, processes and provision that enable an institution to recruit and retain staff appropriately skilled to undertake its mission” (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003: 23). Both definitions are broad in nature and do not take any particular groups of staff into consideration, but rather focus on the institutional aspect of professional development than individual groups of staff.

A more individually focused definition from “The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development” (CIPD) states that “CPD [Continuous Professional Development] is a combination of approaches, ideas and techniques that will help you manage your own learning and growth” (CIPD, 2014). The definition is taking an individual approach to developing one’s own skills, without focusing on a particular group of employees or a sector. Although the individual emphasis on developing one’s own skills is important, the landscape of learning and development in HE in general is more complex due to the aforementioned historical developments, as well as different perceptions on the academic role and its responsibilities. Hence, there is no accepted definition of professional development single term used and what it entails across academic publications (Bell *et al.*, 2009). Surprisingly, not even the HEA that was established to provide developmental support to HEIs and academics, does not offer a definition (Crawford, 2009).

A definition that incorporates both, the needs of institutions as well as individual staff is that of Webb (1996a: 1) who defines professional development as “the institutional policies, programmes and procedures which facilitate and support staff so that they may fully serve their own and their institution’s needs”. Whilst this definition is broadly relating to staff again, it however distinguishes between both, the institutional and the individual needs of staff, which can specifically differ in terms of academic staff, which will be looked at more closely in the next section. Webb (1996b) criticises the notion of professional development as too broad, as it does not consider the individual but rather employees across the board, meaning it does not consider the different individuals and roles in HE, as development cannot be the same for everyone (Webb, 1996a).

The lack of understanding of learning and development and the confusion surrounding it, is highlighted in a small case study containing 16 academic staff members and five non-academics,

at a post 1992 University that looked at the participant's understanding of the term staff development (Crawford, 2009). The overall findings show varying perceptions among the participants. Some see professional development as an integral part of their academic work, something that they already do, by staying informed about new research in the field or networking with other research groups. Others view it as being separate to their day-to-day tasks, such as IT training that enables them to fulfil certain tasks, whereas yet another group believes that learning and development is essential in doing their work (Crawford, 2009). An interesting finding of the survey highlighted that some staff had not considered professional development as such before (Crawford, 2009). Although the survey was carried out on a small scale, it can provide some insights in the previously mentioned complex structure that HEIs have the different units it comprises and various interest groups.

Definitions and understandings of professional development differ as can be seen in Crawford's mini study and further research needs to be undertaken in order to better understand the nexus of academic staff and their development. How and where staff is developed is debatable and definitions need further attention. One such view puts the development within individual units or departments in Universities into the spot light as the many definitions are often too broad in nature (Webb, 1996a). Further clarification and attention is needed with regard to different groups of staff as roles and responsibilities can vary, for instance between academic and support staff (Doidge *et al.*, 1998: 1).

Most attention given in the professional development of academics is concerned with "educational development – the development of teaching and learning" despite the different terms that describe it (Webb, 1996: 1), a view that is supported by Blackmore and Blackwell (2003) who believe that the focus is too narrow by not involving research staff. Academic development, where it is supported, focuses on teaching and learning. In the view of McCaffery (2010) professional development has become an integral part in HE activities across the various staff groups in Universities, including the higher financial expenditures. Surprisingly though, he refers to publications that are rather dated in painting a current picture, especially on financial measures dedicated to professional development. Additionally, how and to what degree these measures are implemented in HE departments or schools may vary as mentioned above.

One influencing factor highlighted on professional development is the involvement of senior managers and leaders (Clegg 2003b: 4, in Bell *et al.*, 2009), which shows that the provision for development opportunities on a more senior management level has increased over the years too. The provision for academic development is however not clear in publications.

### **2.6.3 Social Learning and Professional Development**

All barriers of ESD (see section 2.4) are connected with a common thread, an unclear or even vague understanding of the concept of SD among the various stakeholders of HEIs and its relevance to individuals and groups. In particular academics who are at the core of teaching students, are important in initiating and propagating SD as a concept, as they convey the curricular content to students and can spark their interest in further SD engagement.

Social learning highlights the importance of bringing different individuals to the table who can learn from each other and who can initiate change as a group (Hegarty *et al.*, 2011). Hence, as part of learning and development initiatives, social learning could facilitate the understanding of SD. As it also embraces diversity and the exchange between individuals and groups, ESD learning and development activities can utilise this way of learning to foster learning opportunities and internal cooperation. Furthermore, developing staff is also seen as essential in transforming HE curricula in conjunction with the adoption of organisational behaviour and change management theory (Thomas, 2004).

Necessary theories and concepts can facilitate understanding of this stakeholder group in particular and how their support can be utilised to successfully drive a change process. Given that academics are at the front line of educating students, Lozano-García *et al.* (2008) believe that it is indispensable to understand sustainability concepts and act as advocates in order to pass these on to students appropriately. As previously discussed by Holdsworth & Thomas (2015), ESD integration needs to be understood from an organisational change process. Therefore, the main focus of ESD integration should be on “capability and confidence-building, participation ownership, empowerment and the generation of meaning”, while taking stakeholders views into consideration (Sterling, 1996a: 200). One way of contributing to academics’ social learning in ESD could be to take the idea of ‘facilitation’ as discussed by Hurth *et al.* (2015) forward. Although this curricular initiative focused on students, the idea here is to use facilitation to support academics ESD learning throughout a learning and development experience.

Various HEIs have shown a commitment to ESD professional development. A prominent example is the University of British Columbia (UBC)<sup>41</sup> that offers a variety of courses and fellowship programmes for academics to get involved in sustainability (Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, 2014). Staff wishing to incorporate SD into courses that they teach can choose from different programmes and initiatives within the University, to learn more about sustainability and the incorporation of its varying aspects into modules taught. Others, who would like to promote SD in their departments, can take part in a programme that provides funding, teaching and learning resources and networking events. Two to four paid hours can be used per month to spread the word about SD and engage fellow staff members. However, taking part in this programme needs to be signed off by the individual's line manager. Interested academics can access teaching and learning resources and toolkits necessary to support their SD related projects, and network with various groups across the University, while also applying for grants to fund specific projects.

A recent project, funded by the European Union and led by the University of Gloucestershire titled University Educators for Sustainable Development (UE4SD) identified professional development in 54 HEIs across 33 European countries. A publication with 13 best practice examples from 10 countries was compiled, including the creation of a database for University educators (as referred to by the project) and the development of an academy that is underway to support staff development in SD (Mader *et al.*, 2014; UE4SD, 2015). Furthermore, this initiative has led to a special issue in the International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education published in 2017.

Similarly, in the UK the University of Gloucestershire convened a workshop in which 23 staff from all faculties came together to share or swap own examples of good practice of SD, and exchange personal experiences and insights, by ultimately leading to valuable ideas for the University's own sustainability centre and an edited book containing the presented case studies (Roberts and Roberts, 2008). As with the former case study the 'swap-shop' exercise was geared to people who already had some reference to SD, as participation required a brief 400 word description of own

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<sup>41</sup> UBC was the first University in Canada to set up a Sustainability policy and a respective office to incorporate SD in all aspects of University operations, teaching, research and community work. The University has gained recognition for its work through various awards (UBC, 2014), is part of a voluntary reporting scheme and has appeared in research papers across the globe as a positive example of SD integration. In addition UBC takes part in a voluntary reporting scheme the 'Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System' (STAR), by sharing information on its SD activities across the whole University that allows assessing and rating universities and their SD initiatives (AASHE, 2013).

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positive practice, possibly putting off staff who are not knowledgeable about sustainability and who have not engaged with it before.

The University's Sustainability Team has also developed a professional development programme, which is included in the institution's strategy. The programme supports individuals and departments in linking sustainability to their respective subject area, while also funding projects that align with the sustainability strategy, including staff, students, and the local community (University of Gloucestershire, 2017b). The sustainability strategy highlights the support of professional development through a reward system, as well as a closer integration into recruitment activities of the institution (University of Gloucestershire, 2017c). While the professional development initiative is a part of the sustainability strategy it is however, voluntary and further indicators of how the reward systems is linked to SD integration and professional development is not further detailed. In addition, sustainability only receives a brief mention on one of the last pages of the strategy (University of Gloucestershire, 2017a).

Other examples of initiatives at different Universities in Europe and South America show successes in training and development of academic staff (Holmberg *et al.*, 2008; Huisingsh and Mebratu, 2000). The case study of the Tecnológico de Monterrey University (Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008) underpins their sustainability integration through the importance of a training course (Educate-the-Educator) that was designed to educate academics on SD. Although positive in nature, the case study suggests that only interested members of the faculty took part in the training and that the programme was optional to attend, leaving out individuals who might not be familiar with SD.

Though there are efforts of some Universities to promote ESD training, these initiatives are on small scale. Cant and Kulik (2009) believe that missing engagement with learning and development can be seen as a significant barrier in embedding ESD into HE curricula, as shown in outcomes of a case study they conducted. This can stem from the fact that institutions are not offering any SD related development opportunities for staff or differ in the opportunities available. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on HEIs and the opportunities presented for academic and support staff alike, to develop their knowledge and skills on SD.

In order to engage with ESD it is necessary to make learning and development and incentives available, but also ensure that academics have the time to engage with SD training and research (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013). In this respect, Müller-Christ *et al.* (2013) state that incentives do not necessarily have to be tangible as praise and recognition can equally be important. Besides communication of the changes and why they are happening it is essential to also have access to training in order to make sure that academics can acquire and deepen their SD knowledge (Hayles

and Holdsworth, 2008) and ways to measure, track and communicate outcomes achieved (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007). This can however lead to only interested individuals taking part in these development opportunities as claimed by Hayles and Holdsworth (2008). It appears that all educators involved in the initiatives mentioned above were interested in sustainability and supportive of the concept, which made the efforts easier of the facilitators to conduct their training or encourage academics to attend. Hence, finding ways to spark individuals' interest is necessary to reach out to more academic staff. However, a more in-depth involvement with the aspects of learning and development is needed in order to provide an insight into long-term implications of ESD integration.

Development programmes could also have positive outcomes on teaching and learning material produced. An analysis of management textbooks as mentioned by Acevedo (2012) shows varying perceptions of ethics by management researchers, which reflects the misconception of ethics and related terms in the greater public in general. Considering the lack of knowledge of many academics in ESD related areas (such as Business Ethics, Sustainability, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)), ill-conceived textbooks and other learning materials might lead to misconceptions of the specific areas. Learning and development and the cooperation with individuals from different University groups can support staff in widening their knowledge base of ESD. Klein (1998) suggests a more radical approach and to leave the teaching of (business) ethics to philosophers, or at a minimum level at least collaborate with philosophers. This can constitute the grounding for academics in the field of business to acquiring the relevant knowledge, in order to confidently and correctly teach students. Sharpening academics knowledge and arming them with the appropriate set of tools to familiarize themselves with SD and its delivery might not only prevent the teaching of wrong theories, but also give lecturers the confidence to deliver the content.

Although individual case studies show some opportunities for academic staff to widen their SD knowledge, and learn and exchange with peers, not much is known about development programmes and training opportunities for staff, or how academics acquire the necessary SD knowledge or skills to engage with ESD integration. Roberts and Roberts (2008) believe that professional development is not yet fully taken into consideration as a means to further ESD integration and that advocates often still fight a lone battle in their field of interest. There is however, a modest growth in literature that advocates, the further training and development of academic staff to further their knowledge and skill-set on SD (see Barth and Rieckmann, 2012; Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008). Only recently, a special issue titled 'Professional Development in Higher Education for Sustainable Development' was published in the International Journal of

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Sustainability in Higher Education, with the main focus on training and development of academic staff in ESD integration.

### 2.6.4 Informal versus Formal Learning

Learning among academics takes place in two forms formal and informal, or non-formal as referred to by some (Eraut, 2000). According to Becher (1999) and Knight (2002) a vast amount of learning takes place informally and cannot be seen as such, or is often recognised in comparison to formal learning (Clegg, 2003b). Within academia, this can refer to networking, conferences, peer-reviews among others. Outside of HE informal learning is found in many other lines of work, including medical and legal professions (Becher, 1999).

Informal learning is seen as an important part of social learning, and hence a pre-requisite of a learning organisation (Wenger, 2000). It should be at the heart of a learning organisation as it relies on knowledge building through informal methods and channels in order to support formal measures of learning (Wenger, 2000). Nevertheless, Webb (1996) criticises the neglect of personal experience, or informal learning in professional development for academics.

Informal learning that takes the form of peer reviews, conferences and generally networking with colleagues, presumes an interest in a specific subject area, generally one's own specialist area. Whereas some ESD engagement across business schools in the UK is taking place, it is yet to be established how institutions engage and support academics with ESD integration, and if so, highlight formal approaches used within professional development. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight how academics learn and develop their SD skill-set, how they perceive their environment and the support provided by their school, faculty and/or University as a whole, in order to work towards utilising formal and informal learning of ESD within professional development frameworks.

### 2.6.5 The Professional Role of Academics

In addition to conceptual debates, learning and development is an area that is traditionally associated with Human Resources departments that have gradually evolved across HEIs or have replaced personnel departments. Professional development where it existed as such was more geared towards support or allied staff and teacher training. Depending on the institutional context the focus of professional development is still likely to lie on teaching and learning as

highlighted by Webb (1996b). With the development of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) of the HEA, academics teaching and supporting student learning have the opportunity to gain HEA accreditation and fellowship as well as professional development courses, however without acknowledging the needs of training and development for research staff. Up to now it still focuses on the development of teaching staff (Crawford, 2009).

With major changes and a more market-driven HE sector, academic roles have changed too. Whereas, in the past academics' work comprised research, teaching and other administrative duties (Clegg, 2003b) their responsibilities now can involve further tasks including securing research grants and the pressure to publish in highly ranked journals, making activities among institutions more competitive. In addition, the profession of an academic is not a secure job for life anymore, with the rise of temporary contracts and projects and with tenure not always given.

The external pressures that institutions have faced for years and the increasing pressure to secure funding has led Universities to act more strategically, which in turn is leading to a fragmented focus on teaching or research (Barnett, 2003). This further exemplifies a distorted view of the importance placed on researching over teaching oriented practitioners (see Ramsden, 1998; Trigwell and Shale, 2004). In his book "Scholarship Reconsidered" Boyer (1990) looks at how the role of academics and their responsibilities has developed over time and the extensive debates separating research and teaching. Crawford's study mentioned above also shows differences perceived between staff who predominantly teach and other who mainly undertake research, highlighting that research is perceived as more valuable and enjoys more benefits compared to teaching (Crawford, 2009).

Perceived differences between academics who research and others who teach can then further complicate the understanding of professional development that often focuses on teaching, rather than research (Clegg, 2003b), hence leaving research intensive or research only staff out of the equation. Where professional development is not tied to a certain profession or area of interest, it is often designed to enhance general skills that are important across HE departments including IT skills, presenting research, acquiring grants and others. In addition, the narrow focus of UKPSA can as Clegg further exemplifies, hinder a higher involvement of other professional development opportunities (Clegg, 2003b). Nevertheless, Clegg (2003b) advocates discussing the conceptual issues of professional development.

The different understandings of learning and development can be seen in some case studies (see Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008; Roberts and Roberts, 2008) that relate learning and development to staff engagement across disciplines, and less so by assuming the faculty or University to have a share in responsibility. There are advantages to have someone in the department/school to hold

trainings as those individuals are closer to the research and teaching than a developer from the administrative side of the University (Wilkinson, 1998).

#### **2.6.5.1 Area of Expertise versus University Loyalty**

Another aspect important to understanding professional development at Universities is the relationship of academics to their area of expertise versus their department or institution (Clegg, 2003b). Clegg (2003b) argues that academics often choose subject specific development opportunities over institutional programmes and highlights that this issue needs consideration when looking at academics' development. This view is supported by Alabaster and Blair (1996) who acknowledge that there is an inherent resistance towards changes external to academics' disciplines. Not only are academics "positioned within many systems or communities", but all of these groups "may have different discourses, approaches to teaching and learning, understanding of CPD and priorities" (Crawford, 2009: 73). The different views complicate matters specifically with respect to "formal and informal approaches of learning in the workplace" (Crawford, 2009: 73).

#### **2.6.6 Conceptual Framework**

Individuals are not only seen as a driving force to implement change in organisations, but in a HE context it is these individuals who play a crucial part in driving the implementation of ESD into University curricula (Holdsworth and Thomas, 2015). There is however, a lack of attention in research on ESD integration and its links to learning and development of academics. It is not clear how appropriate measures can support ESD champions and facilitate engagement of other academics. Learning and development could provide a way forward to open up opportunities to engage staff in (and outside of) business schools with sustainability issues in order to integrate ESD across HEIs, but even less is known about business academics' perception of such learning and development measures.

On the forefront of ESD learning and development provision in the UK is the University of Gloucestershire that offers staff across the institution the opportunity to apply for annual grants that are supported by different opportunities to foster curriculum integration. The training is conducted by the sustainability centre in collaboration with the professional development department of the University, offering workshops, 1-to-1 sessions and collaborations on projects (University of Gloucestershire, 2014). However, not much is known about the effectiveness of the

initiative at the University of Gloucestershire or academic views, which is a rare undertaking across academia.

As discussed in this chapter, several issues need to be taken into consideration when focusing on learning and development and ESD integration. SD has a different status and is treated as a different priority in academia. This also applies to professional development that varies across HEIs, and is influenced by a University's background, history and strategic make up. Moreover, the role of academics, their responsibilities, the relationship or even loyalty to their institution compared to their area of interest and research/teaching all play a part in ESD integration and subsequently learning among staff. In addition, informal learning is essential within academics' development and makes for a large part of learning that takes place in HEIs.

In my thesis, ESD integration takes the form of a systemic change process. It is ongoing and has no beginning or end, but rather needs consideration continuously. This framework involves various actors and aspects within Higher Education. Factors that drive ESD integration are leadership and senior management support combined with organisational policies, students, support staff and academics. Academics in particular are perceived as important, because they are passing relevant knowledge on to potential future business leaders but also engage in relevant research.

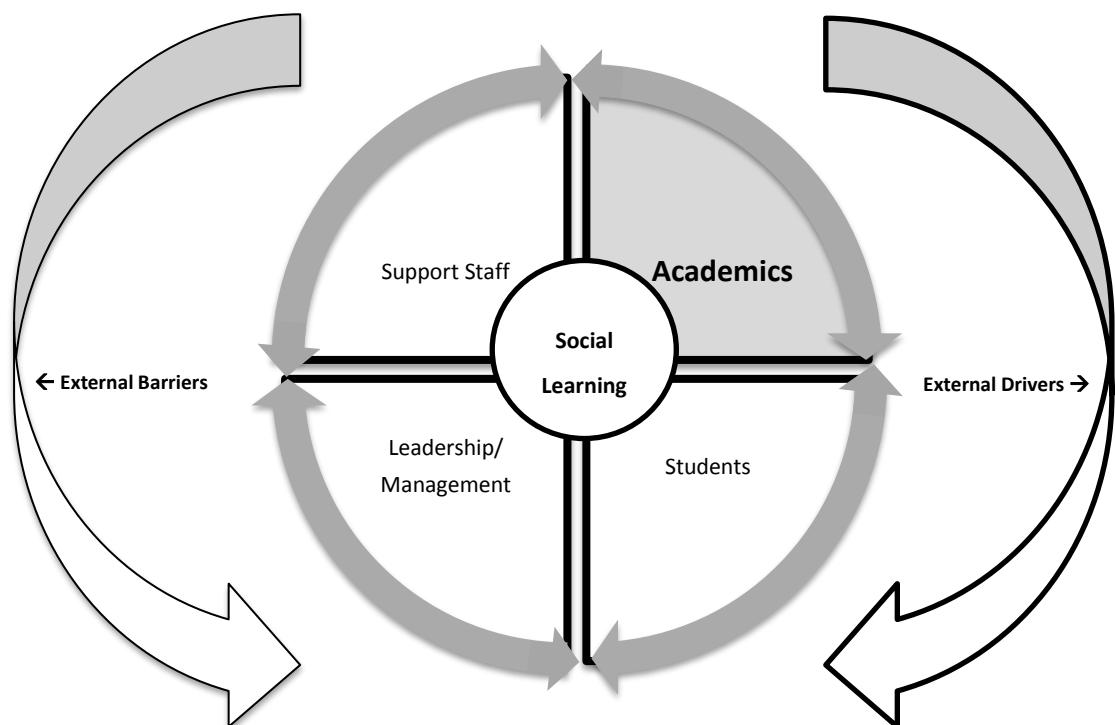


Figure 2.2 ESD Integration as a Systemic and Continuous Process in HEIs

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The framework in Figure 2.2 depicts ESD as systemic change process that requires social learning. The individuals and groups internal to a HEI are connected through social learning, suggesting that learning and development represents a key aspect in any organisational change that is to be effective. Social learning connects all groups and requires that all actors learn from and with each other. External influences then further shape and influence University policies and activities, by either driving or putting up barriers to the change process, expressed through both outer arrows. The same applies to stakeholders represented in the middle circle, as resistance is also present in each group. Thus, drives or hinders the social learning process. Any arrows moving clock-wise in the above figure, both in and outside of the middle circle, represent a move forward or drive in the change process. In contrast, any arrows that are moving counter clock-wise, represent a resistance to the change process. Overall, this framework emphasises the importance of social learning in driving the systemic change, which is ESD integration, by connecting all stakeholders, while being continuously confronted with internal and external resistance. The emphasis for my research lies on academics as a driving force, as highlighted in the figure. Nevertheless, all individuals and groups are required in a systemic change process to drive ESD integration, which is likely to encounter resistance, internally and externally.

## 2.7 Summary

The literature review has analysed publications on SD in HE and how academics drive, or hinder the implementation of ESD into University curricula. It has established that academics are an important barrier but also a crucial driver of ESD. Reviewing current and past literature has also highlighted the importance of connecting SD and ESD research with more conceptual and theoretical principles, in order to facilitate its implementation. ESD integration was framed within the concepts of systemic change and social learning as an intrinsic part of change processes. In addition, the importance of learning and development of academics was highlighted as a vehicle for social learning, and a lack of research undertaken on learning and development in Universities was identified.

The literature identified some case studies undertaken on ESD in a HE context in general but not related to business schools. Although the importance of academic staff is continuously emphasised, the area lacks more in-depth research. Hence, the literature review has identified a gap in SD learning and development of academics in order to drive ESD teaching and research. ESD integration often lack the learning and development component of academics in HEIs. In the few cases where universities do incorporate development opportunities, these often cater to staff

with an existing interest in SD. Moreover, this chapter has uncovered the uncharted area of professional development relating to academics, which is still in its early stages of research and development and could have implications on academics' perceptions on learning and development provided by HEIs.

Examining past and current discourse on ESD integration into business schools and the role academics play, has helped refine the overall research questions and shaped the conceptual framework for this study (see section 2.6.6), which supports the empirical research undertaken and research questions outlined below.

1. What are UK Business Schools doing to integrate ESD into the curriculum, and what roles do individual academics play?
2. How do academics perceive the support given by their school/University to integrate ESD into research and teaching and what is their perception on learning and development?
3. How are UK Business Schools contributing to ESD learning and development of academic staff?
4. What hinders the provision of formal ESD learning and development opportunities and how does this impact ESD integration?



## Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overview

The following chapter identifies the research paradigm and underlying philosophical view that guide and support the empirical research undertaken for my thesis, including the rationale for case study research. It also lays out the research design and strategy developed to collect empirical data, and methods and tools used to answer the underlying research questions mentioned in Chapter 1. It furthermore, identifies multiple case studies chosen and details the ethical and quality considerations that go along with this type of research. The chapter concludes with further insights on the data collection and analysis undertaken. Figure 3.1 provides a brief overview of the structure of my research, highlighting the key themes starting with the research philosophy of interpretivism, followed by the research design, data collection and analysis.

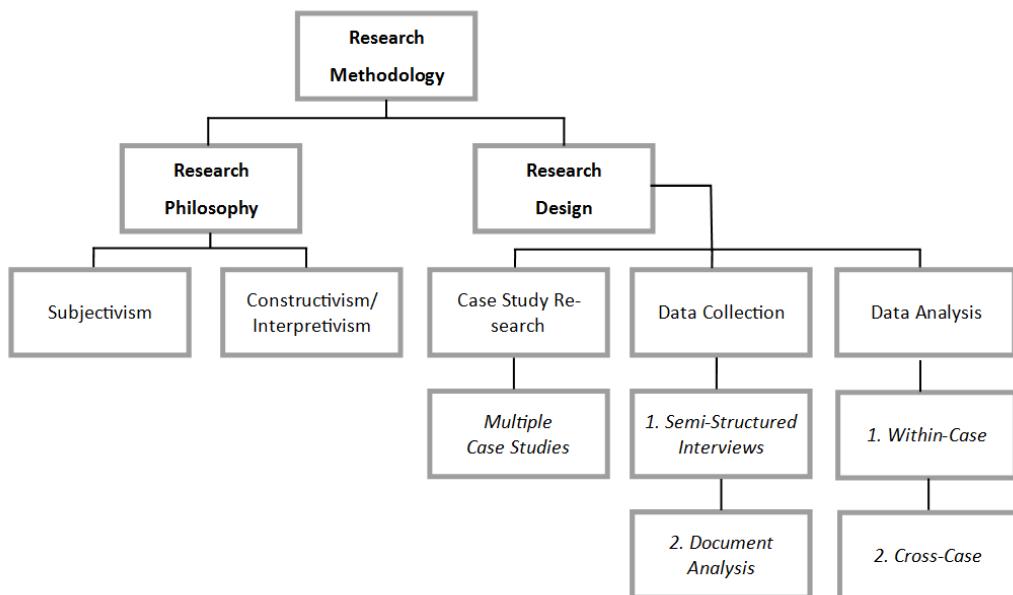


Figure 3.1 Overview of Methodology

Adapted from Yin (2014)

### 3.2 The Interpretivist Research Paradigm

A research paradigm represents “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17). This definition, although basic in nature, can simplify the understanding of what guides research and

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helps explore ones philosophical roots. Framing the philosophical view helps to understand the research undertaken, and how decisions made influence the overall process. Beliefs can be understood as a philosophy or more precisely, the view behind a specific method used to undertake research. A paradigm can explain where a researcher's perspective is coming from and guide the reader to better understand views and research decisions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012)<sup>42</sup>. Identifying the research paradigm requires understanding of how reality is constructed (ontology) how knowledge creation is viewed (epistemology), the importance of values and ethics (axiology), as well as the research methodology.

Ontology is concerned with the concept of reality, providing two views that of objectivism, showing that there is a reality independent of individuals interactions, and subjectivism, showing an inclusion of individuals to create different realities (Lichtman, 2013). My research is concerned with individuals and their perceptions and experience with professional development within their academic setting. The research requires the input of participants and the researcher, which ultimately creates different realities from all individuals involved.

Each University has their own strategy to integrate ESD into HE curricula and operations, good practice, challenges and support given for staff to engage with more responsible management education. These different angles of ESD integration, coupled with the individual perspectives from academics and support staff interviewed, creates various realities relating to each case study, but also within case study settings. In addition, ESD and the relevant activities in research and teaching are furthermore taking place in different settings, which can be interpreted as varying realities. It is therefore, dependent on the perspectives of the participants, the case study particulars, experience, myself and our interaction, which is common in a subjectivist view of reality. Empirical research that falls into a more subjectivist realm can include case studies, qualitative data collection such as interviews, action research and others.

The research philosophy can also be viewed in terms of how knowledge is created. The positivist view, or scientific view, for instance sees knowledge as something tangible that can be generated through mere facts and resembles more the data collection of scientific research (Gill *et al.*, 2010, in Saunders, 2012). On the other end of the continuum of epistemology is the interpretivist view in which knowledge is created by both parties, participants and researchers alike. Following the interpretivist philosophy, my research is involved more closely with individuals studied in order to

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<sup>42</sup> A detailed account on the historical evolvement of different research paradigms and how various schools of thought have developed over the years is provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2011).

make sense and understand participants, their experiences and perceptions (Saunders, 2012). The level of involvement in this philosophy also holds that researchers are able to put themselves into the participants' shoes and understand where they are coming from (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

While collecting research data I was involved with the participants of the study, including an exchange of SD specific knowledge, widely understood and defined in many ways. Engaging with individuals and exploring their experience of researching and teaching SD at each particular business school and participants' perceptions on learning and development, suggests that knowledge is created by participants and myself. Furthermore, different University settings, backgrounds and histories of institutions influence individuals' experiences and perceptions. Hence, an interpretivist view is considered as an appropriate philosophy that supports the research project.

Although the close involvement associated with interpretivism can suggest a lack of objectivity, Lichtman (2013) believes that a researcher can never be completely objective in any research and asks qualitative researchers to free themselves from the belief that their research has to be objective and to subordinate their research in comparison to a more subjectivist philosophy. Lichtman's (2013) view is mirrored in Guba's reflections on becoming an interpretivist researcher emphasising that "positivism rested on a system of beliefs no more foundational than any other, and therefore deserved no more privilege than any other" (Guba, 1996: 48). Striving for objectivity is important, but it is the researcher-participant relationship that opens up various avenues to explore the why and how in research questions and learn about participants' stories that might not have been uncovered with a more positivist philosophy.

Axiology focuses on the importance of values and ethics within the research paradigm. It asks questions about one's own values and how these ultimately shape the research decisions made (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 1997). It further enquires about the purpose for undertaking research and the value it brings with it (Heron and Reason, 1997). Value creation begins early on in identifying the rationale for undertaking research. It also includes a sense of the direction of where the research is going to lead and how research questions are framed, all of which is guided by own values, ethical belief systems and the premise of conducting research ethically. Research ethics will be discussed in more detail below.

My doctoral thesis links to previous research on responsible management education in UK business schools. It developed from an interest in ESD and its integration into HE and the aim to contribute to ESD knowledge creation. This was driven by the belief that business students and academics alike have a greater responsibility within our society and their working environment, to rethink current business practices and engage in responsible decision-making. In essence, this

research project is driven by an interest in ESD education and the personal belief and desire to contribute to a more sustainable world. Values as such play a crucial role in my research. While one might assume a value free environment in quantitative compared to qualitative methods, value creation and therefore the reasoning for undertaking research suggests that there is no completely value-free research environment.

### **3.3 Abductive Approach**

Research outcomes are based on different approaches related to theory building, being either of a deductive, inductive or abductive nature. Deductive reasoning builds on existing theory to test a hypothesis or test a theory and is linked to scientific research and the collection of quantitative data (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Inductive reasoning creates theory through the research that is undertaken by looking at themes of the outcomes and relationships that emerge (Saunders *et al.*, 2012) and is therefore connected to qualitative research. Research does not have to be theory driven, as the core function of the inductive approach lies in deriving valuable findings from the data collected (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). However, delaying an engagement with existing literature until data is processed is criticised by Thornberg (2012) due to its unrealistic expectations to drive theory building without any pre-supposition and theory engagement. Yin (2014) too points out “some theory development prior to the collection of any case data is desirable”, as it facilitates framing the context of the study undertaken.

The abductive approach goes one step further in combining both, induction and deduction (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Charmaz *et al.* (2017: 431-432) define abduction as “selecting or inventing a provisional hypothesis to explain a particular empirical case or set of data better than any other candidate hypotheses and to pursue this hypothesis through further investigation”, which is often the case when surprising or unexpected research findings emerge. Abduction is therefore, situated between induction and deduction as it moves from existing literature, the emergence of unexpected data and formulation of new assumptions and revisiting of the literature review which requires a pre-existing set of theoretical knowledge (Charmaz *et al.*, 2017). In addition, abduction involves the deliberation of the “best explanation for the facts you are collecting”, hence a primary task undertaken in case study research (Thomas, 2015: 70).

I am following the abductive approach by analysing multiple case studies, in order to gain a greater understanding of ESD integration in the context of each business school, which further allows a better comprehension of the phenomenon of academic engagement and development from an institutional and individual perspective (Lichtman, 2013). Moreover, this is guided by a

review of the literature that suggests barriers to ESD integration and promotes learning and development, but lacks to delve deeper into academics professional development needs. Looking at multiple business schools allows comparisons across different Universities to create a more detailed account of ESD integration and depict institutional learning and development opportunities, individuals' perceptions and reasons behind the lack of sustainability related training.

Understanding individuals who are engaged in ESD integration and making sense of their views is therefore an important aspect in abductive reasoning, which links with an interpretivist view of research. A literature review was produced to get an idea of the latest publications and trends on ESD and apprehend some background on professional development within HE. However, a gap in the literature was found within professional development in HE and more specifically relating to ESD. It is therefore expected that theory building will further evolve throughout the data collection and analysis stages, and findings will reshape the literature review.

Whatever approach or method is used to undertake research, *Saunders et al.* (2012) point out, each philosophy fulfils an aim and is directed at different ways of looking at research, meaning various views depend on the research questions looked at and how one chooses to answer them. Again, the research questions play a vital role in guiding the research and the methods used. Research questions signpost the philosophy adopted and strategic direction taken. Both are fundamental in steering the research process and the methods used (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

The research questions guide and facilitate understanding of several business schools and ESD integration. They initially focus on setting the scene by providing an understanding of institutions and their strategic and operational focus for ESD integration, followed by a more specific view on each case study and incorporation of multiple interviews on experience and perception from individuals' perspectives. Furthermore, the questions emphasise the qualitative nature of the case study research, and the richness of data collected. The abductive approach is in line with the questions as the in-depth nature of data allows to explore ESD within each individual case study setting, provides comparison across cases and unravels how individuals across business schools experience and perceive their role and the institutional support provided, something that has lacked in focus by publications in the field.

In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of each case study, the qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews was complemented by secondary data collected through documents, reports and business school websites. This is specifically helpful in strengthening case study research findings and substantiate the claims made.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design lays out what methods and tools are used to collect data and how these are analysed to answer the research questions (Scott and Garner, 2013). Designing or planning a research strategy is one of the most important steps in undertaking empirical research. The research design can be seen as a blue-print of the field research undertaken, the preparation needed and possible issues that could arise and effect the research strategy chosen (Berg and Lune, 2012). Two main objectives of research design refer to organisational aspects and the quality of the results to be obtained (Kumar, 2011), including location of the research, time frame, the people involved in undertaking but also the individuals who are contributing to creating new knowledge. Issues relating to quality can highlight if the data collected is reliable, valid and objective to answer the underlying research questions and is ethically sound.

The design stage is critical in determining how research can be undertaken, and identify and work around possible pitfalls. The research questions are used as a guide of the methods used, by additionally providing insights into the knowledge that is being produced and the underlying views and philosophies (Scott and Garner, 2013). It is therefore not a straightforward process as it involves reflection on the reasoning and the views of the researcher, aspects that can all be influenced by our own views and experience.

#### **3.4.1 Multiple Case Studies**

The research questions are answered by undertaking case study research. Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 59) define a case study as a “detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event”, which can take various forms including that of organisations or groups of people. First and foremost case study research “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in-depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin 2014: 16).

ESD is set within the boundaries of HE, more specifically in the real-world context of each institution, their background and history. The setting shapes each case selected and fulfils a requirement for case study research. ESD is in its infancy and varies across HE and the many diverse environments and cultures that exist within institutions. Its integration is seen as a

continuous process and reflects complexities of change within HE. Choosing a case study approach with its in-depth nature and focus can facilitate understanding of individual business schools (and their wider institutional context) and the diverse ways of approaching ESD integration, and the contested nature of academic staff, their roles, responsibilities and development opportunities.

Case studies tend to require the use of different research methods and participants as there are often various data sources and measures that apply to a context (Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2014). They are also commonly used when two factors apply, firstly the overall use of research questions posing how and why questions, and secondly changes taking place relating to one or several cases (Yin 2014). Two of the four research questions (see section 1.2) are 'how' questions that probe an in-depth analysis of the account of ESD within business schools and the individuals involved, relying on the context specific background and the wealth of information about the unit(s) analysed. In addition, publicly available information on institutions' websites complemented interviews undertaken, including that of academics and support staff engaged with SD (see section 3.4.5).

Single case studies are predominantly associated with and used in experiments or for the analysis of specific phenomena or extraordinary events<sup>43</sup>. In contrast, this study uses multiple case studies with the aim to compare ESD integration across different institutions, by adopting a more consistent design and application with each case (Yin, 2014). While the study still focuses on the phenomenon, the multiple case rather than single case approach brings similarities and differences of the cases to the foreground (Thomas, 2003). Each of the cases can be holistic in nature too, with several cases set in their own context, or additionally embedding a number of units of analysis (Yin, 2014).

Case study research is not characterised by sampling as it seeks to gain a better and more detailed understanding of something (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2015). Rather than identifying a sample population, these case studies were undertaken on the grounds of replication in order to find similarities or alternatively identify differences across UK business schools (Yin, 2014), which resulted in more robust measures and findings. Thus, a large amount of data, to form

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<sup>43</sup> The rationale behind it stems from focusing on one particular or specific scenario or outcome to understand an underlying problem researched (Yin, 2014). Single case studies can be either holistic in nature, with one case as part of a specific context, or embedded, by incorporating several units of analysis within a case (Yin, 2014). Several units of analysis allow a better understanding of different groups or parts of the case looked at, embedded within one case study and across the same context.

## Chapter 3

generalisations relating to a wider population were not required, as this was not necessarily their purpose. The reasoning behind the use for this study was rather a focused and in-depth view of a more sizeable population, to identify commonalities and differences in ESD integration and learning and development of academics.

The detailed nature of the case studies and the measures chosen to identify relevant outcomes inevitably lead to a comprehensive data set. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured interviews with academics and support staff involved in ESD integration, complemented by analyses of data from reports on the relevant strategies and activities of each business school and institution as a whole, Universities' websites and other stakeholders such as PRME, EAUC, and Advance HE. These two methods provided the richness that represents case study research, which allowed a detailed understanding of the various and different environments researched. Stake (1995) refers to this richness as the gathering of stories of actors of case studies, in order to understand a specific environment that is studied. This is a major advantage because a variety of data can be collected that are detailed and rich in content, using different methods (Yin 2014), which allows for a greater understanding of ESD integration and professional development.

Figure 3.2 shows the process of multiple case study research, including the individual stages, starting with some theory development, the case selection and research design. It highlights the return to theory development depending on case study results and their potential effect on the initial aim of the study.

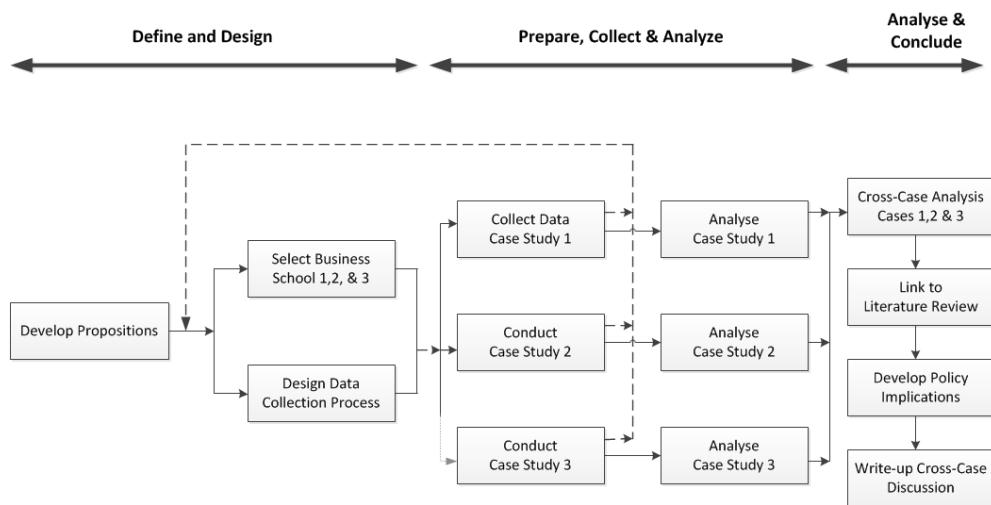


Figure 3.2 Multiple Case Study Procedure  
Adapted from Yin (2014)

Case study research is not a linear process and considering the uncertainty that comes with it, “the need for you to balance adaptability with rigor – but not rigidity – cannot be overemphasized” (Yin, 2014: 75). As the above figure shows, changes that occur while collecting data have to be taken into consideration, requiring a reconsideration of the theory developed up to that point and a potential redesign to conduct further studies. Again, this fits with the abductive approach as some theory has been presented through the literature review but is likely to evolve through further themes that emerge through each case study. Thomas (2015) agrees and highlights the nature of case study research and the role of adaptability by going back and forth between case data collected and the literature produced.

### 3.4.1.1 Debates on Case Study Research and Details of this Study

Case study research, at times, still lacks acceptance as a stand-alone research method from qualitative research by being rather confused with doing research in general (Yin 2014). However, it is not a sub category of qualitative research but allows various methods to be utilised. This study makes use of qualitative research as part of multiple case studies, in the form of semi-structured interviews, complemented by the use of secondary data, more precisely document analyses. Moreover, there is a general lack of literature that focuses on case study research and can provide guidance to researchers, as compared to other methods (Yin 2014), while also neglecting the insights case data can provide to fully understand a single or multiple cases.

Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies other major misunderstandings of case studies such as generalisability,

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confusion with pilot cases, the tendency to increase bias, and the problem of theory building from outcomes.

In terms of generalisability, case study research is not based on sampling (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2015) and as such does not reflect a larger population, but rather aims to build “theoretical propositions”, meaning the “goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations)” (Yin 2014: 21).

With multiple cases, the importance lies on replication rather than sampling from a larger population. Outcomes of the three case studies can then refer back to theoretical propositions, which can subsequently support further theory development and identify best practice across different institutions.

Comparing different cases and therefore a larger amount of data, can be perceived as more reliable and valid (Yin, 2014). However, sampling techniques can also go beyond the scope of the research, as the potential sample population is likely to be too large. Moreover, the detail associated with case studies and the amount of data collected can render a study unfeasible or unrealistic. While it is appealing to undertake more case studies in order to back research findings, this might not be necessary, particularly if the research undertaken only looks at one particular case, scenario or problem. In addition, an increase in case studies also means that a larger amount of data needs to be collected, which can impede research, time and costs (Yin, 2014), and would also acknowledge the reasons of undertaking case study rather than other research methods. Ultimately, case study research is not about sampling, but about the selection or choice made (Thomas, 2011).

The cases, and if units of analysis are included, have to be defined clearly for the research project to be undertaken realistically. Furthermore, how many case studies are chosen depends on one's own judgement (Yin, 2014), taking into account the aim and objectives, the research questions and the attributes and context of each case chosen. Three case studies were chosen for my empirical research, each with a unique background (see sections 3.4.3 & 3.4.3.1). Given the amount of data gathered and its detailed nature, the supervision team settled on three case studies to be sufficient to answer the underlying research questions.

While misconceptions about case study research persist, the literature supporting its use and publications are steadily growing (see Yin 2014, Gillham 2010). Its use is advocated as it can facilitate a better understanding of phenomena, by looking at a range of variables within a case or multiple cases (Gillham, 2010). As mentioned above the dimensions of a case or multiple cases need to be identified, while designing the research by following the aim of the study and the

identified research questions. This provides the necessary boundaries and ensures a focus on what is studied.

### 3.4.2 Qualitative Research

The three case studies are guided by a qualitative approach, which is concerned with data that cannot necessarily be counted or expressed in numerical terms and involves gathering information of the lives of people, groups, organisations, and highlights their experience, feelings, and thoughts<sup>44</sup>. The qualitative angle provides more depth to each business school case and allows a closer relationship to the participants involved in the studies, which can provide more answers to questions that might not be able to be addressed through numerical data (Berg and Lune, 2012).

Compared to a qualitative approach, quantitative research incorporates a much larger audience however, results drawn reflect “a small number of variables” (Scott and Garner, 2013: 9).

Qualitative research methods such as observations, case studies or interviews focus on a smaller sample, but are more detailed in their approach to gain an insight into the data collected, which ultimately brings me closer to the people involved in the study (Scott and Garner, 2013), in order to “know the story behind the numbers” (Mayan, 2009, cited in Lichtman (2013: 4). By looking at each individuals experience and perception, their own story unfolds, which fosters understanding of ESD integration in each case study. It further helps to probe and answer how and why questions that are typical in case study research.

Lichtman (2013: 5) points out that it is a lot clearer to undertake quantitative research as it “follows fairly objective and clear guidelines” whereas, “qualitative research most certainly does not” as it can change throughout the process. This applies to case studies too, as the process of collecting data is not a linear one. It is therefore, a more flexible process that can shift throughout the research and can change the direction it is taking. The aspect of change within case study and qualitative research also relates to experience that the research participant brings along and new avenues that the research can open up, as well as the view the researchers are taking. This is not

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<sup>44</sup> In contrast, quantitative research, as the term already suggests, is concerned with the amount of data that is collected. This can be done through surveys, statistical records and other forms of already existing databases.

to suggest that there are no changes within quantitative research, but the process is more aligned as compared to qualitative research methods.

### **3.4.2.1 Debates on Qualitative Research**

The participant-researcher relationship is closer compared to that in quantitative research, and thus raises questions underlined by philosophical views and experiences (Lichtman, 2013), how data are gathered and construed (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In addition, this includes bias through interactions and interpretation of data collected, own values as an influencing factor, as well as ethics and organisational aspects. Bias refers to “a preference that inhibits impartial judgement” and that conveys the perception that research with a more objective stance has a higher value adds to the objectivity issue (Lichtman, 2013: 21). Given the close involvement with research participants, bias is more of an issue in qualitative than quantitative research.

Lichtman (2013) proposes that the researcher takes on the most important part in a study, considering the close involvement and handling of data and the engagement with participants. This is an important point as rapport with the participants is build early on and is important in order to gain access to candidates, data, but also ensure participants are comfortable with me to conduct the interviews. Various strategies can be utilised to keep bias to a minimum, for example taking the existing opinion of something studied and suspending it for the time of undertaking the research (Lichtman, 2013). However, this method raises issues of one’s own view, rationale and emotional involvement in the research undertaken. In addition, it requires a consistent approach in undertaking the research and composure.

Steps taken to prevent and counter bias within the research study are the use of different strategies and measures, including a solid literature review and a thorough but also flexible research design. Moreover, existing data gathered from academics were complemented by interviews from support staff and a document analysis. Throughout the data collection stage, participants had the opportunity to clarify questions and resolve any queries, as well as double-checking and approving interview transcripts. Each step of the data collection process was discussed in detail, clarified and confirmed in frequent intervals with the supervision team to ensure procedures were followed and bias was minimised. Furthermore, a timely transcription, use of notes, memos and reflections post interview sessions ensured consistency in gathering and analysing data.

Lichtman (2013) suggests that the current way qualitative research is looked at is rather conservative, given that academics always have a stake in the research that they undertake. Thus,

it is important to be aware of one's own involvement and objectivity issues, by being more confident in the method used and avoiding to undervalue own work in terms of objectivity, as it is a part of qualitative research that can be undertaken in different ways and approaches and views can vary (Lichtman, 2013). Ultimately, whatever method chosen, Lichtman (2013) maintains the argument that there is no such thing as a value-free environment, even in quantitative research, as one always identifies with the research undertaken.

### 3.4.3 Case Study Design

The case study design<sup>45</sup> includes the pre and post collection of empirical data, consisting of five steps (Yin, 2014) . The pre-data collection stage was used to firstly define the research questions, which consist of two 'how' and two 'what' questions and in turn guide the design. One of the distinct attributes of case studies is the use of how and why questions (Yin, 2014) and the more in-depth nature of exploring ESD across the case studies identified. The second aspect is a proposition or purpose to further provide a direction of the issue focused on within the cases. Both of these first steps go along with the review of past and present literature upon which first propositions emerged as to the direction the research was taking. Given the importance of SD issues and the role business schools play in the debate, the proposition was made to further explore the perceptions of academics and support staff towards their role in driving ESD. While refining the literature and research questions it emerged that there was a lack of learning and development and ESD, which was to be further explored. The third step is defining the cases, thus identifying the business schools, and the individuals involved in ESD integration (Yin, 2014), including what is and what is not a part of the case.

Post data collection, data were then coded and analysed and connected to propositions made pre collection phase (see Appendix F), followed lastly by interpreting its results (see Chapter 4; Chapter 5:). Including this step in the research design can anticipate how data can potentially be analysed or what is searched for during the coding stage, by further linking it to the original aims and objectives. Themes and patterns were identified and categorised to fulfil the objectives and

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<sup>45</sup> Pre-data collection includes "a case study's questions; its propositions, any; its unit(s) of analysis" and post-data collection includes "the logic linking the data to the propositions"; and "the criteria for interpreting findings" (Yin, 2014: 29).

answer the research questions. Interpreting the findings finally allowed a reflection of the literature review, the current findings and theories developed and the data collected.

### **3.4.3.1 Identifying Multiple Cases**

The cases and units of analysis chosen were clearly defined, including parameters that determined the scope of the study (Yin, 2014), in order to focus on the research questions and purpose to avoid accumulation of too much data and ensuring that the research was feasible and realistic. Three business schools were identified, each set in its own distinct University environment, which has its own characteristics and history. Furthermore, all schools have their own agenda on integrating ESD into University curricula and fostering the engagement of academic staff.

Initially conferences served to connect with academics in the field. Further research on HEIs was then conducted by using the People and Planet University League Table, which assesses Universities on their responsibilities and commitments and classifies these according to grades such as first class, 2.1, 2.2 and third class<sup>46</sup>. A list of institutions from all categories was compiled and key contacts identified, including the ones met at conferences. These were then contacted about the research by email. While the list of potential case studies was compiled through convenience sampling such as through initial contact of key persons and proximity of business schools, this obviously did not have an impact on the decision of participants to part-take in the study.

The cases studied can offer valuable insights on how each business school tackles ESD engagement and support of business academics, due to their differences. Some defining characteristics refer for instance to size, location, age and student numbers. Two of the three case studies are located in the South and one in the North of England. The two Southern business schools are part of smaller institutions that are teaching focused and have a student population of less than 10000. The third business school however, is larger with over 10000 enrolled students and is research active. The size and potential reach can also be seen in each institutions' income, with both cases in the South showing lower income streams. Moreover, all three case studies are involved in sustainability related activities.

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<sup>46</sup> The criteria and their emphasis for the ranking consist of 14 categories including policy and strategy, ethical investment, staff and student engagement and others (People and Planet, 2014b).

### Multiple Case Study Design

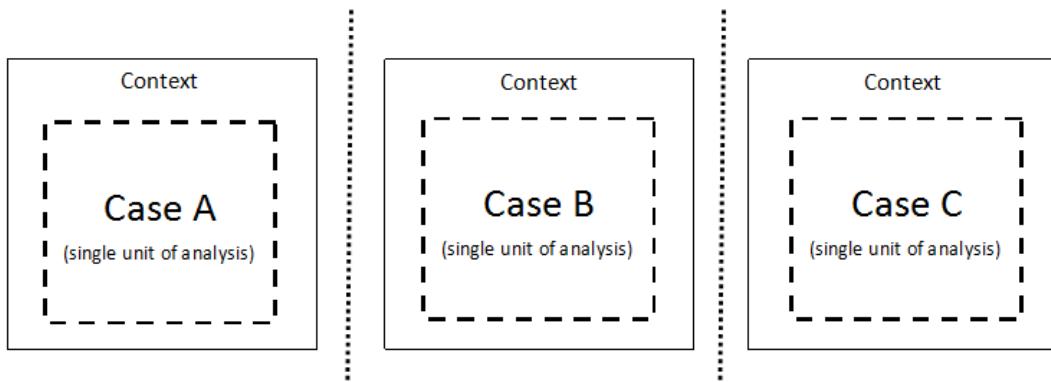


Figure 3.3 Multiple Case Study Design  
Adapted from Yin (2014)

Defining the cases, also referred to as ‘binding’ or ‘bounding the case’, sets the boundaries or parameters in which to research the case (see Yin 2014, Baxter and Jack 2008). The boundaries can be set by looking at what is studied, including the focus, and what is not studied (Miles et al. 2013), “time and place” (Creswell 2003, in Baxter and Jack 2008: 546), and “time and activity” (Stake 1995, in Baxter and Jack 2008: 456). As emphasised in Figure 3.3 each case study is set within its own context and consists of one unit of analysis. Within each business school, the focus is directed towards academics that are teaching and researching or are engaging with ESD integration across their respective school, as well as support staff whose roles involve SD activities. Additionally, support staff included may or may not directly work in the business school but within the broader confines of their University. The rich data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis suggests that a number of three case studies is sufficient to analyse for this study.

A conceptual framework can be helpful in setting these parameters or boundaries to clarify what the case study looks at. As illustrated in section 2.6.6, ESD integration is depicted as an ongoing process with barriers working against it and drivers pushing it forward. The case studies will focus on academics as drivers of ESD and more closely, analyses support mechanisms, including learning and development opportunities that interchangeably fosters academics’ engagement and drives ESD integration.

#### **3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they offered some structure, as opposed to other interview options. The use of semi-structured interviews provide a rough guide that was followed by covering specific areas or questions (see Appendix E for interview questions used in my thesis), by also allowing flexibility in adding additional questions or depth to an interview (Berg and Lune, 2012). In addition, a degree of structure allowed some control in collecting relevant data, as opposed to unstructured interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2012), which was necessary to answer the research questions and address their particular focus. Moreover, this left some room for flexibility in order to take the distinctive characteristics of each case study into consideration.

However, adding structure to an interview also required the use of a more specific language that interviewees across the cases were able to understand and that was more specific to their work (Berg and Lune, 2012). The thesis has highlighted the use of SD and ESD terminology (see section 2.2.2) and uses ESD as an umbrella term to incorporate any related subject areas including CSR, business ethics, corporate governance and others<sup>47</sup>. In order to ensure that participants understood the meaning of this umbrella term, an explanation on its meaning for the research project was provided as part of the introduction of the interview process. Given the complexities in understanding, defining and implementing SD and related concepts across HEIs, interviewees were also encouraged to express their own definitions and understanding of the concepts.

Interviews offer a more focused approach to collecting data as they provide the opportunity to delve into the topic and add meaning, but also allow to clarify issues related to the questions asked (Kumar, 2011). In addition to adding depth, the interviewer-participant relationship is more emphasised. While interviews provide various advantages they can also be time consuming in terms of meeting interviewees (unless done electronically through Skype for instance), transcribing the material, but potentially also lack in quality of the data collected (see section 3.5), which can stem from the interaction between the individuals involved and the researchers interview skills (Kumar, 2011).

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<sup>47</sup> “ESD” as set out by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), was chosen to represent the multifaceted subject area that is related to responsible management education.

### 3.4.4.1 Interview Participants

In contrast to quantitative research,<sup>48</sup> case study research is not applying sampling techniques to answer the research questions and identify cases, but rather tries to replicate the cases chosen (Yin, 2014). It is generally not the purpose of case studies to generalise results based on large samples but rather look more specifically at a smaller group of participants. Unlike probability, sampling that is based on a large amount of data and assumes that every individual within a population is likely to be chosen. It is also not always possible to consider the whole population looked at in qualitative research or even identify a sample clearly. In order to establish how participants were identified, non-probability sampling is a viable option to choose a sample (Berg and Lune 2012). Participants identified are a number of academics and support staff engaged with SD teaching, research and other activities. Engaging with SD and ESD respectively however, was not synonymous to having an interest in the subject area.

Participants were not readily available and were identified through various channels, including conference participation, referral or directly through researching business school websites. This resembles *purposive sampling*, as it involved my own knowledge of the population researched to identify suitable participants (Berg and Lune 2012). Identifying participants through referrals resembles snowball sampling, which refers to using recommendations from existing participants (Berg and Lune 2012), a method that can facilitate finding candidates when referred to by another academic that they already know. Overall, it is seen as a way of facilitating the search for participants suitable for a study (Lee, 1993, in Berg and Lune 2012).

The number of interview participants was not strictly defined and was guided by the assumption that data was collected until it reached a saturation point (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007), meaning until nothing new could be established from the information retrieved. 16 individuals were interviewed, with five participants from Case A and C, and six from B.

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<sup>48</sup> A sample is chosen that represents a larger group of people, unless the whole population can be involved. Generalisations are then made about the population based on its outcomes. Quantitative research often relies on probability sampling and the assumption that every individual within a population is likely to be chosen for the purpose of the research, which contains a large amount of data that represents a wider population (Shaughnessy, 2008, quoted in Berg and Lune 2012: 50).

### 3.4.5 Secondary Data

In addition to interviews conducted, I identified and analysed secondary data in the form of documents from each institution's website. Document analysis is defined as a "systemic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic" (Bowen, 2009: 27). It is a simple and cost-effective way of gathering data to complement existing research methods, provide further information to each case studied (Guba, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1981), track changes that have taken place over time, help formulate new questions within each specific context and strengthen findings from interviews (Bowen, 2009).

Identifying the documentation followed a convenience sampling approach, as the documents were readily and freely available (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Data collection on each website included the systematic search for content and documents relevant to answering the research questions, in particular one and three. By using the navigating and search functions, most relevant data collected were easily found on each website. Any content relating to ESD and SD engagement was deemed relevant, including strategic, operations, curriculum activities, professional development, as well as factual and background information on each institution. This included information available in the form of articles, strategic documents and other reports and those of other stakeholders such as the Advance HE. Furthermore, 'Sharing Information on Progress' reports (SIP) were analysed, depicting the progress that Business Schools have made that signed up to the PRME initiative. Once relevant content related to SD/ESD was identified, data was coded and a document analysis was undertaken (see section 3.6).

Analysing these documents helped "uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (Merriam, 1988: 118). Overall, it helped to provide a background to each case study, their history, information, including, size and student numbers, as well as policy and strategic documents that showed each universities' engagement with SD and ESD. While objectivity could be seen as an issue in document analysis (Guba and Lincoln, 1981), the information presented on University websites are not only available to the public, but as Bowen (2009: 31) explains "documents are 'unobtrusive' and 'non-reactive' – that is, they are unaffected by the research process.

It is worth noting that document analysis might not provide the full picture of a case study, thus promoting biased selectivity (Yin, 2014). Publicly available documents such as those on University websites are conveying a message to a particular audience (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, it was important to be clear on the use and intended meaning of these documents (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Considering that SD related activities could be used as window dressing by organisations to

favourably portray their sustainability activities, it was necessary to critically address the purpose of the documents accessed. Hence, its 'complimentary' use in this research.

### **3.4.6 Research Setting and Time**

Time is a critical factor as it determines the length of the research process, availability of participants, and sets a clear beginning and completion to the research project. Given the research was conducted part-time, data collection took place over the period of January 2015 to September 2016, with the majority of the interviews having been conducted early on, and some collected in the later stages, due to time constraints of individual participants, or a loss of interest to part-take.

The setting of the field research was considered also important, including the accessibility of the location, the availability of research participants and tools needed to carry out the research as smoothly as possible (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The research questions can guide the decision making process on a setting for the interviews (see, Marshall and Rossman, 2006) and possibly dictate that field research is undertaken at a specific location. However, access to participants and the necessary data did not depend on traveling to specific University sights. In light of the different technological tools such as Skype, there was no immediate need to travel directly to remote locations to meet participants involved in the interview process, specifically for Case C.

Some authors note that a face-to-face interview can establish a better relationship to the participant and foster trust necessary to obtain more in-depths information (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013; Holt, 2010). However, it is also important to highlight that Skype offers a video call option, which can give participants the feeling of being close to the researcher and interacting in real time. The use of Skype can be recommended for obvious reasons such as reducing travel time and costs and managing time constraints due to busy schedules. In light of the research undertaken it is also positive to reduce the environmental impact through traveling and support more responsible and environmentally friendly ways to collect data.

Skype also allows for a better access of participants, while providing both parties with a degree of control of the interview, and giving the interviewee a sense of control and some privacy (Hanna, 2012). The drawbacks can be bad internet connections that can influence the experience and potentially cause distractions and disturbances on both ends. Nevertheless, face-to-face interviews can lead to technical issues too if there is a fault with recording devices, or if

interviewees are not comfortable with a face-to-face interview. In this case, Skype would provide them with a greater amount of control.

Traveling was undertaken where it was viable for both, myself and the participants in terms of finding a suitable date and time within participants' busy schedules and the geographical accessibility of the agreed location. Some participants suggested the use of Skype themselves, while some preferred this option to fit the interview around other responsibilities. Additionally, participants appeared to be confident and experienced in using electronic forms of research and tools to communicate. Nevertheless, on a couple of occasions bad internet connections meant that interview processes did not go as smoothly as expected.

Practicality is frequently mentioned as an important factor (Berg and Lune, 2012). Events including seminars and conferences, in geographically suitable locations that were readily accessible were used to connect to academics within the same area of research and recruit individuals for the interview process, by arranging multiple interviews in a specific location. It was also taken into consideration that practicality should not compromise on the quality of the interviewees chosen (Berg and Lune, 2012), and participants should fulfil the requirements set for the study, to guarantee quality data gathered.

### **3.5 Research Ethics and Quality**

Given the closer relationship with research participants in case study research and the qualitative approach chosen, my role as a researcher was detrimental in preventing any potential interference through my work with participants' lives. Ethical considerations included assessing the effects that the research could have and potential harm to the interviewees and appropriate measures taken to prevent issues. Berg and Lune (2012) suggest that benefits of the research should outweigh any potential risks (see Figure 3.4). Alternatively, risks should not be "greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life" (Kumar, 2011: 245), which was evident in the research suggesting a low potential for any harm to interviewees. Ethics clearance was given by the University of Southampton Ethics Committee after reviewing the research and data collection measures.

An essential part is also concerned with the protection of data and individuals from any harm that the research can cause. Ethical and privacy issues might not be obvious at first glance, specifically when no vulnerable or at risk participants are part of the study. Nevertheless, the research undertaken considered whether and how the process interfered with individuals' lives and how

data were protected when entering participants professional and even personal space (Berg and Lune, 2012). Ethical considerations were weaved into the whole research process, including a well-defined rationale to undertake research, its overall design, the tools used and decisions made (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

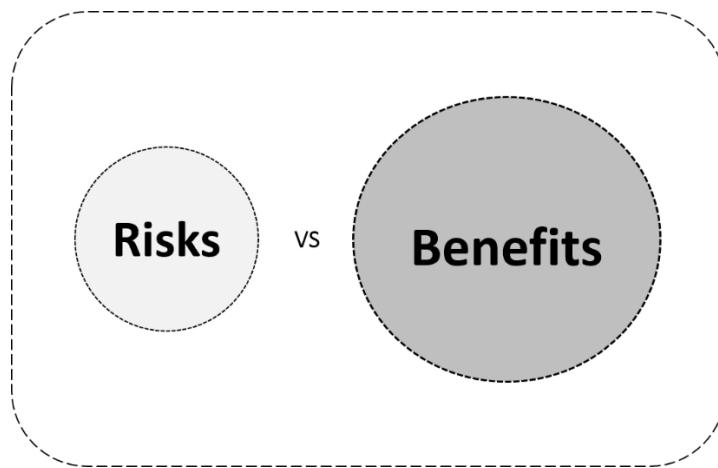


Figure 3.4 Research Risk/Benefit Scale  
Adapted from Berg and Lune (2012)

Berg and Lune (2012) emphasise negligence and lack of preparation as two of the main issues that can decide on the outcomes of research projects. A well-designed research strategy should raise possible risks and work towards preventing these. Hence, the importance of the research design highlighted earlier. Furthermore, they add that “the process, like much of qualitative research, is a negotiation, a trade-off for the amount of access to subjects the researchers are willing to accept in exchange for the amount of ethical risk they are willing to take” (Berg and Lune, 2012: 62).

Potential risks can affect both researcher and the participants and lead to a withdrawal from the study, impairment of the relationship and a loss of reputation. There were no imminent risks for interviewees. The majority of participants contacted were happy to take part and appeared to be genuinely interested in the study. However, on several occasions potential interview participants dropped out of the process and the research design had to be adapted accordingly. Emphasis within the research design was put on adapting the research process, preparation, sharpening interview skills and relationship building, as well as close consideration of anonymity and data confidentiality. Developing rapport with all individuals was key in gaining access to participants and data, but as mentioned above some instances required the adaption due to a loss of interviewees.

### 3.5.1 Informed Consent

Collecting data required obtaining permission of participants in taking part in the research process. It was also concerned with informing potential participants about the study undertaken, the role that they play in it, possible issues that could arise, and the choice to withdraw from the project at any stage if they wished (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Prior to data collection a participation information sheet detailing the research aim, the participants' involvement and their rights of withdrawing from the study at any time, was sent out (see Appendix C), as well as a consent form (see Appendix D). In addition, keeping records of data collection and names of participants and institutions that are mentioned confidential, required the consent of interviewees (Kumar, 2011).

Using informed consent shows that the individuals' roles have been taken into consideration by also highlighting possible issues, whereas the advantages or positive outcomes should outweigh any issues (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Participants were emailed a consent form and provided with a paper copy at the time of the interview, which was then signed by both parties, and re-iterates the most important points of participation, including the right to withdraw at any time of the research. These measures aided in preparation of the interview process, by ensuring participants were informed about the research, aspects of confidentiality and were happy to take part (Berg and Lune, 2012).

While signing a consent form should signal that participants are aware of the purpose of the research and potential risks, it does not assume that informed consent is over, but rather takes place throughout the whole research (Morse and Field, 1996). Meaning, participants have the right to stop participation at any time if they are not comfortable with any part of the process. Furthermore, a consent form does not automatically guarantee that participants have read or understood the research fully. As Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest participants might never really understand the extent of the study and their involvement. This is probably true and can depend on how well participants understand the field or the specialty of the researcher in general, as well as the different shapes that research can take throughout its different stages and changes that occur. Nevertheless, participants were provided with an information sheet, detailing the research project, potential risks, and a consent form, summarising all important research issues.

### **3.5.2      Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Data collected and participants' personal details were treated with utmost care in order to avoid potential adverse effects for participants, such as exposing individuals to superiors or other stakeholders of the research undertaken. Confidentiality therefore, required clarity on how data were gathered and handled as part of the research process (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). This also relates to the storage, in paper and electronic form, access to the data, and subsequently also the use of data within the thesis, including names of individuals and organisations.

In contrast to confidentiality that ensures that participants are not identified, anonymity cannot always be guaranteed, as it relates to not actually knowing persons and names involved in the research (Berg and Lune, 2012). Both terms are often confused but need to be differentiated because anonymity can, specifically in qualitative research, not always be ensured (Berg and Lune, 2012), due to the close contact and involvement with participants, often also face-to-face. However, keeping data and names of individuals and institutions mentioned confidential is one aspect that can be guaranteed. It does moreover require that individuals identity is disguised and pseudonyms are used instead of actual names (Berg and Lune, 2012). For these reasons, names of participants and institutions were changed and codified to ensure anonymity to potential stakeholders, other than the researcher herself.

### **3.5.3      Data Protection and Storage**

Further measures were taken to protect collected data and identities by securely storing information on the Universities servers only accessible by myself and IT administrators when needed. This is in accordance with the Data Protection Principles as outlined in the Data Protection Policy of the University of Southampton (University of Southampton, 2008). Any paper copies of research material were safely and securely stored in a safe at a storage facility.

### **3.5.4      Quality Measures of Research Undertaken**

The quality in research is defined by various measures such as validity, referring to how a study has been undertaken to draw the best results possible from it, and reliability, which determines how reliable outcomes are when the research is repeated (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Yin (2014) differentiates further between construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability to test the research quality in case studies. However, these measures raise questions

regarding subjectivity, bias and the measurement within case study research and the qualitative approach chosen compared to quantitative methods. The above measures are seen as a poor fit for qualitative (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, Guba, 1989, Lincoln & Guba, 2013) and case study research, due to the lack of clarity in terminology. Moreover, the terminology is merely copied from quantitative research without taking differences to qualitative research into consideration (Thomas, 2015). Therefore, the quality measures used in my research are those suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1989), as these are devised to reflect qualitative research more appropriately.

#### **3.5.4.1 Confirmability**

Confirmability (or neutrality) refers to objectivity of the research undertaken (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Hence, the importance to “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being used” (Yin, 2014: 46) in order to ensure that research undertaken fulfils the criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability. The research incorporates sources of evidence from interviews and document analysis. A chain of evidence was established by documenting every step of the data collection process clearly and precisely using an audit trail, a case study protocol and database. To ensure findings were “factual and confirmable” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981: 125), the process therefore, required robust planning and preparation to undertake field research, in conjunction with a set of carefully constructed research questions and a review of the literature. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on a robust research design, weighing up benefits and risks to using semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and the potential impact on interviewees.

#### **3.5.4.2 Credibility**

Credibility (Guba, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Saunders *et al.*, 2016) refers to ensuring that data collected correspond with the intended meaning as conveyed by interviewees. This was achieved through several measures. The research followed a structured approach to data collection, conducting interviews professionally and to the highest possible standard and the engagement of participants to verify data. This ensured strengthening of, and consistency in, the process in order to avoid leading on or influencing interviewees, as well as limiting potential researcher bias like first impressions and preconceptions (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Any queries were clarified directly with participants or as soon as possible after interviews, including the opportunity to double-check transcriptions for inaccuracies. Additionally, the research introduced

and clarified terminology such as SD to interviewees and explained their meaning in the context of the research, whilst allowing participants to share own understandings of definitions. This helped to avoid misunderstandings and different perceptions of key terminology. Furthermore, memos and notes were used to keep track of the research process, engage in constant reflections, including my own part in the process and discuss the progression with the supervision team in every meeting.

### **3.5.4.3 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the generalisation of findings, if viewed from a quantitative perspective. Case studies are not necessarily chosen in order to gain generalisable findings but rather to study a specific situation or context or multiple. Hence, the outcome of the case studies “should maximize what we can learn” about a specific phenomenon or several (Stake, 1995: 4). In addition, as data gathered tends to be rich and full of context and key themes or issues might repeat throughout the cases, which in itself can be seen as a form of generalisation, but on a smaller scale (Stake, 1995).

The case studies’ outcomes were interpreted through “analytic generalization” in order to shed light on theories and concepts incorporated in the study, which in itself seeks to go beyond case study research and can lead to further enquiries as Yin (2014: 40) points out. He further adds that “generalization will be at a conceptual level higher than that of the specific case” (Yin, 2014: 41). Moreover, research questions chosen acted as a guide in providing a direction of analytical generalisation (Yin, 2014).

The inherent differences within the HE sector in itself, but even more so by adding the construct of ESD, makes it difficult to generalise findings. The multiple case studies looked at will provide a comparative analysis from which further theory and concepts can evolve, to shed light on the complexities of ESD in an already complex HE system. Similarities and differences identified across the three business schools will foster understanding of learning and development and ESD integration, and support further research that can be built on. Ultimately, it goes beyond a theoretical underpinning and potentially trigger further research (Yin, 2014).

#### **3.5.4.4 Dependability**

Dependability is concerned with the question of how reliable a study is in yielding the same results if it is repeated or as it is also termed replicated (Guba, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). It takes changes within research into consideration, therefore requiring a recording of any alternations that can be used to understand and reproduce findings. Considering the unique nature of cases and their specificities such as background of institutions, ESD strategies, and individuals' research and teaching interests, it was obviously challenging to replicate a study. However, given the challenges of ESD integration and the differences between institutions, it is not expected to yield the exact same results.

Rather than looking at dependability from a replication perspective, Guba and Lincoln (1981: 124) suggest auditability as more appropriate as it "requires simply that the work of one evaluator (or team) can be tested for consistency by a second evaluator or team". Dependability therefore, also refers to the use of the same research tools, procedures, and interview questions consistently. In order to minimize bias a "case study protocol" and a "case study database" were used (Yin, 2014). The case study protocol served as a data collection plan that helped to focus on the important aspects of what was studied and what kind of data was collected. It highlighted all aspects of data collection, including a summary of what the study is about, interview questions, and methods and techniques to collect data and produce a case study report.

As the term suggests a case study database functions as a transparent and well-arranged way of storing data collected and field notes produced, which enables comprehension of the data collection process and any changes that occurred, including an audit trail which stores "records of data gathering and analytic procedures" (Lapan *et al.*, 2012: 418). The audit trail also includes any changes and decisions made within the analysis process, in order to justify these. Ultimately, when the research is audited, the above measures facilitate understanding of the study undertaken, decisions made, thus ensure consistency of the process.

### **3.6 Data Collection and Analysis Strategy**

#### **3.6.1 Analysis Strategy**

A strategy and various techniques were chosen for the analysis and devised to cope with the large amount of rich data gathered. The strategy chosen to analyse the data is "relying on theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2014: 136), derived from initial propositions and research questions that

guided the literature review and shaped the data collection process. This was further supported by several techniques “explanation building” and “cross-case synthesis” or cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014: 143). Figure 3.5 lays out the analysis process of the data collected by highlighting various stages, discussed in more detail in the next section. The analysis was driven by the research questions, which in turn shaped the structure of the interview questions. Whilst this suggests a deductive approach to coding and analysing, the process was merely guided by the structure of the interview questions. The findings however emerged from the data, processing of it and reflection that took place, which suggests inductive elements. Additionally, coding and the subsequent analysis were approached with an open mind to adapt to newly emerging themes. The mixture of both, deductive and inductive, elements therefore emphasises the abductive approach of coding.

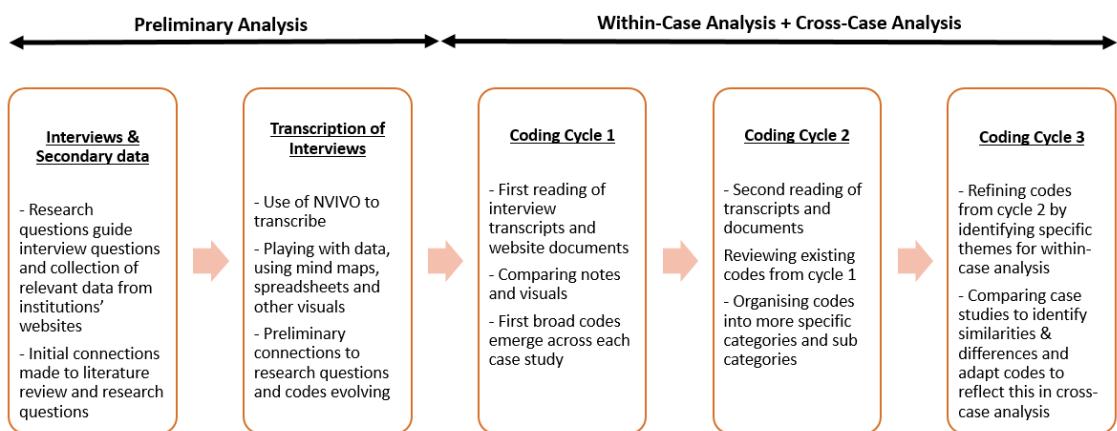


Figure 3.5 Data Analysis Process

### 3.6.2 Coding Cycles

As outlined in Figure 3.5, the analysis of the research findings started early on during the data collection stage by linking information loosely to research questions and literature. The analysis continued with the transcription of the interviews and reflection on the conversations with the research participants, and already emerging themes that repeated themselves. Transcriptions and coding for the first and second cycle were undertaken by using the qualitative analysis software NVIVO. I further looked at the transcribed interviews and the notes taken, by playing with data and emerging codes and themes that frequently appeared by producing spreadsheets, mind maps and other visual illustrations, and comparing interviewees’ replies. This is a common starting point

to find similarities within the answers and provide a sense of direction to devise an analysis strategy (Miles *et al.*, 2014; Yin, 2014). Frequently appearing aspects related to similar challenges and barriers across the case studies including staff engagement and ESD enthusiasts.

This step was followed by coding the interviews in three stages (see Appendix F & Appendix G for an example of the coding process). Codes as such are “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” relating to a sentence, paragraph or larger amount of data that is categorised (Miles *et al.*, 2014: 71). Coding in itself is a form of analysis considering that a thought process is already taking place of linking data to categories, making it an important step between data collection and further analysis (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). Moreover, coding can be viewed as a process that requires “deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data’s meaning” (Miles *et al.*, 2014: 72). A considerable amount of time coding the data retrieved, was linked to a process of thinking, reflecting, developing thoughts and moving back and forth in the analysis process. As a novice researcher, I experienced this stage as one of the hardest, but also one of the most rewarding as the deep thinking that took place, helped to make sense of data and put these into perspective of the research questions.

The first cycle of coding aimed to break down and summarise chunks of data (Miles *et al.*, 2014) by reading the transcripts, notes and data collated from websites, as well as initially categorising these using descriptive codes in the form of individual words or short phrases. This first step included skimming documents and transcripts in order to assign first codes and identify relevant from non-relevant data (Bowen, 2009) such as small talk or interviewees going off topic. Due to the large amount of data, determining their relevance was necessary. Therefore, the conceptual framework (see section 2.6.6) and research questions were used to guide this process. Some broad codes that developed from interview questions and their structure, served as a loose guide. Whilst the aforementioned can be perceived as ‘selective’, Miles *et al.* (2014: 73) suggest that “data collection is inescapably a selective process and that you cannot and do not “get it all”, even though you might think you can”.

The second coding cycle focused on re-reading content and grouping codes into main and sub categories, and subdividing these according their context. This step helped to condense data and was the precursor to the cross-case analysis as it identified emerging themes across the business schools (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Both coding cycles were accompanied by jotting thoughts down in Microsoft Word and NVIVO that came to mind such as connections that emerge between interviews and cases, as well as content retrieved from websites versus interview data.

The third coding cycle was split into two parts, linking to the within and cross-case analysis. The first step refined the categories of themes and sub themes, reflecting the within-case analysis and detailed evaluation of each case study. This initial step was important as it built the context for each business school studied. The second step then drew on a further and final refinement to reflect the cross-case analysis, including similarities and differences that emerged in the first step. The third coding cycle used Microsoft Word spreadsheets and visual illustrations such as mind maps, sticky notes and posters. Although NVIVO aided the research process and was useful in organising large amounts of data and coding these initially, it did not prove as effective for my preference of data analysis in the last stage.

The main categories derived from the structure of the interview questions, designed to funnel information, starting broadly with backgrounds of individuals and their business schools, to more specific details. Nevertheless, the questionnaire design was merely used to organise and structure the coding process, which remained open to, and incorporated new and emerging ideas. Furthermore, themes and sub-themes identified in the coding process, particularly, the third and final cycle also represent section headings in both analysis chapters. Using the codes as headings, was found to not only aid structure in the coding and analysis process, but also reflected the breakdown of the research questions, starting broadly with the organisational context of ESD, to the individual perception of participants.

Content and documents from university websites complemented the interview data gathered. Factual data on the universities' backgrounds, including size, financial data, student numbers and others, helped to provide the backdrop to each case study. However, the coding process revealed similarities and differences between data from interviews and website content that could not be easily verifiable as facts or lacked supportive evidence. For instance, some interviewees questioned the value and legitimacy of some claims made in strategy documents. Therefore, as pointed out by Bowen (2009) one needs to keep in mind that certain documents are produced with an agenda in mind other than that of research. Overall, these differences in perception of interviewees and information found in documents, opened up a deeper reflection and provided a more in-depth inside into potential issues within case studies.

### **3.6.3 Within-Case and Cross-Case Analysis**

The case study findings were evaluated in two stages, firstly through a within-case analysis and secondly through a cross-case analysis. The within-case analysis has the aim to “describe, understand, and explain what has happened in a single, bounded context – the ‘case’ or site” (Miles *et al.*, 2014: 100). Chapter 4 provides an overview of each institution individually, helps to break each case study down to highlight the main findings of each business school looked at and provides an in-depth picture of each institution. The cross-case analysis creates a more comprehensive evaluation by comparing similarities and differences across cases, which also improves the transferability of the research by comparing different cases (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Chapter 5 continues with the cross-case analysis of all three cases, which identifies similarities and differences across the business schools, by emphasising key elements further discussed in Chapter 6.

Given the rich data gathered from all three business schools, using this two pronged analysis strategy has two advantages. Firstly, it breaks down the analysis process and secondly it allows the evaluation of each case study individually before comparing these further. I believe it is important to set the scene and provide some context about the cases first before embarking on a comparison of all three cases. Furthermore, this can facilitate understanding and provide context to the reader for the comprehensive analysis in Chapter 5. Therefore, the analysis will start with the within-case analysis.

## **3.7 Summary**

Chapter 3 has identified interpretivism as the philosophical view in this research. Moreover, it was established that three case studies are used with a qualitative approach. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews, complemented by a document analysis of website content of business schools and their respective Universities. The chapter also highlighted quality and ethics considerations such as the ethical clearance given to undertake empirical research, confidentiality, data protection and quality measures to achieve confirmability of data collected, including credibility, transferability and dependability. Lastly, the data analysis strategy was identified as a two-part plan, including a within-case followed by a cross-case analysis, as well as the accompanying coding.





## Chapter 4: WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Overview

The following chapter presents key findings from the data collection stage. This includes three case studies of UK business schools. Each case study is examined individually by using a within-case analysis, which includes a background to the institutions and individuals interviewed and findings covering the main areas discussed and general themes identified during the coding stages (see Appendix F). One of the sub-themes included relates to teaching and research<sup>49</sup>. I decided to incorporate research and not just teaching as it represents one facet of an academic's role or profile. Research can inform teaching and support the further engagement across an institution through collaborations or dedicated research centres, ultimately contributing to ESD and its integration.

Table 4.1 Overview of Case Studies

	Case Study	Department/School	Number of Interviewees	Positions of Interviewees
1	Case A	Business School Business School Humanities Business School Estates	5	Lecturers Lecturer Lecturer Head of School/Professor Sustainability Officer
2	Case B	Business School Business School Business School Business School Estates	6	Lecturer Lecturer Head of Department Professor Environmental Assistant
3	Case C	Business School Business School Business School Business School Estates	5	Head of School/Professor Teaching Fellow Professor Lecturer Environmental & Sustainability Manager

<sup>49</sup> Research as such does not refer to publications only, but takes a broader perspective to incorporate preparations necessary for one's own teaching.

The cases are presented as Case Study A, B and C, with each interviewee having an assigned pseudonym in order to protect their anonymity. Five participants were interviewed for both Case A and C and six for Case B. The interviews consisted mainly of interviewees holding academic positions in each respective business school. All cases included an interview with a staff member from the estates department, while Case A also comprised an interview with an academic from the humanities department, who was closely involved in ESD with the rest of the interviewees (see Table 4.1). Additionally, participants' job roles show a mixture of positions held and experience.

## 4.2 Case Study A

### 4.2.1 Institutional Background

Case A is set within the institutional context of a post 1992 University, and has a history spanning over 150 years. The newly established University has a long-standing tradition in teacher training and is relatively small with under 10000 students (see Table 4.2). The institution spans over two campuses and offers undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees in various subjects covering business and management, social sciences, humanities and the arts, with a majority of the degrees catering to undergraduate studies and a majority of students domiciled in the UK. The University is planning to widen their courses, with a project underway to offering new degrees in technical subjects.

Case A occupies a place in the '2:2 class Universities' category of the People and Planet University League Table 2017. The league table ranks HEIs' according to their performance related to ethical and environmental factors and is published annually (People and Planet, 2019). In previous years and over the course of undertaking this study, the University's ranking has however notably dropped, with a previous place among the first class category of the most sustainable Universities.

Table 4.2 University Facts – Case A

Size	Areas of Study	People & Planet League Ranking	Domicile of Students
<10000 students	Arts Humanities Social Sciences Business/Management	2.2 Class Category (2017)	97% UK/EU 3% Overseas

#### 4.2.2 Participants' Backgrounds and ESD Interest

Five semi-structured interviews were undertaken with three academics from the business school, one academic from the humanities department, who is highly involved with the aforementioned participants and one member of support staff who holds a sustainability related position across the University (see Table 4.3). All participants work closely with each other and on various ESD projects together.

Table 4.3 Profile of Participants – Case A

	Pseudonym	Gender	Area
1	Sheldon	Male	Business School
2	Howard	Male	Business School
3	Lennard	Male	Business School
4	Raj	Male	Humanities
5	Penny	Female	Estates

Individuals' backgrounds and experience differs not only in the area of SD but career and industry wise. Figure 4.1 provides a glimpse into the various backgrounds of the interviewees. All individuals have different academic and industry backgrounds, including areas such as geography, conservation or engineering. However, there is an element of sustainability in all industries and areas, which connects individuals in their broader interest of SD, whether it is ecotourism, waste management, conservation, or manufacturing.

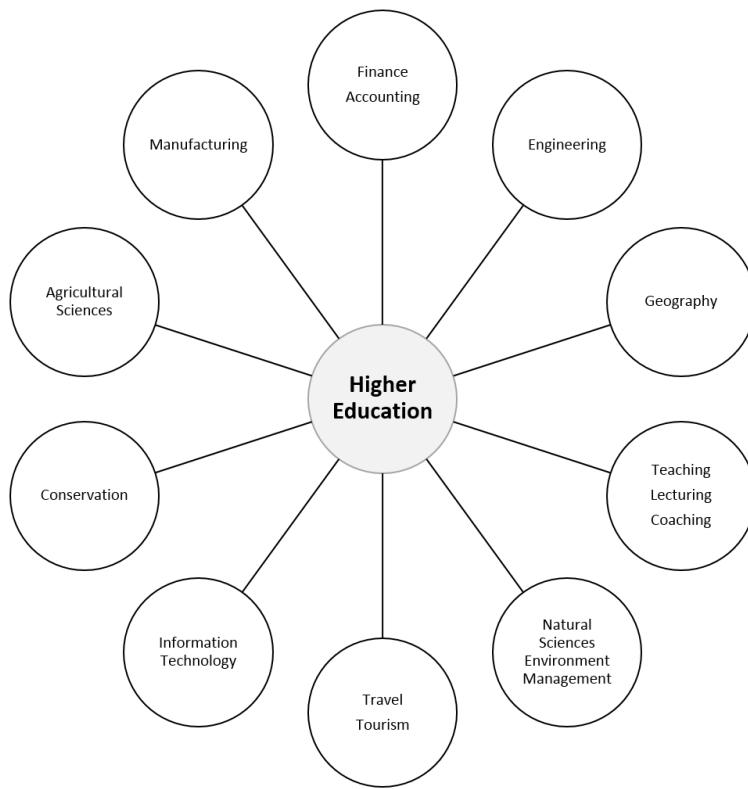


Figure 4.1 Background of Participants – Case A

With the diverse backgrounds in mind, the interest of all individuals has also developed or formed in different ways over the years and at different times of their lives. Table 4.4 provides a brief overview of each participant, explaining how their interest in SD has developed. It shows that Howard, Lennard and Raj have had an interest in the subject area for quite some time, whereas Sheldon gained an interest through different work related projects, with Penny slipping into the subject by chance.

Table 4.4 Participants' Interest in SD/ESD – Case A

How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?	
<b>Howard</b>	"I have always been [interested]...with my PhD it got us talking."
<b>Lennard</b>	"I did that Masters degree and then...my eyes actually opened up to a new...a new way of thinking and realising that that...until that day I was the typical sort of bog standard ecologist that...save the turtles, save the trees."
<b>Sheldon</b>	"You look at all of that together, it sort of says sustainability. And so by getting involved in the maritime strategy, started to realize the importance of sustainability within the context of that."
<b>Raj</b>	"After I finished my first degree I did a...I worked in conservation for a year...that almost by accident. But I...I ended up doing it. I mean, I was very interested in nature and literature, even when I was doing my degree and I did my dissertation on Hemingway and nature... So, I worked in conservation, which was basically...with school children, making nature areas, digging ponds and that sort of practical conservation. And I really enjoyed it."..."It was always kind of there in the background and...been quite sort of involved in the environmental movement."
<b>Penny</b>	"It was an accident. ...because I had some kind of science background and we needed an environment person...it all started because we needed to...we needed to get an environmental permit to operate the recycling fibre plant before we started it up."

### 4.2.3 ESD Integration

Sustainability integration takes place on several levels starting with various University strategies and policies that include and highlight SD and ESD to some extent, followed by operational activities geared towards environmental practices, procurement and estates services. The research activity across the University is low, placing a greater focus on teaching. Overall, there is a small but consistent group of staff and students engaged in raising the profile of SD and ESD, and promote initiatives across its campuses.

#### 4.2.3.1 University Strategy and Operations

The University has devised multiple strategies and policies to show their support of SD and its integration across the institution. In its vision, the Vice-Chancellor emphasises the importance of education and its impact on future generations as a driver of change. He also envisions the responsibility towards, and close collaboration with the local community, as well as pursuing partnerships and activities in a sustainably and environmentally friendly manner, as part of a supportive working environment. This includes the mention of the necessary support and information for academics to integrate SD within the strategy.

## Chapter 4

The University's Environmental and Sustainable Development strategy provides the overall framework, with several other policy documents supporting it. The strategy covers areas including sustainable construction and procurement, the use of an Environmental Management System, waste and recycling, biodiversity and ESD. The steering group that devised the strategy is led by the Vice-Chancellor, of which Penny is a member, and discusses progress made and future plans. In addition, the strategy recognises that behaviour change is important and needs the support from senior management to be successful. How the Vice-Chancellor's work however translates into practice is not clear, particularly in light of some criticism from Lennard who notes that:

"I'm sure... the guy [Vice Chancellor] probably has...has incredible sustainable beliefs and credentials, but you know those don't actually translate to actions on the ground"  
(Lennard)

The strategy shows a strong emphasis on green issues and implementation into operations by using Fairtrade products, encouraging the use of public transport and car sharing, as well as reducing the waste and increasing recycling. It also recognises the importance of a top-down approach and positively notes the formation of several groups across the University, set up to deal with issues such as carbon emissions, health and safety and training staff on environmental issues and the involvement with the National Union of Students' (NUS) Green Impact scheme. Other policies focus on specific tasks such as the waste management and recycling policy, offering sustainably sourced food and beverages, a plan to reduce carbon emissions, and the biodiversity action plan.

A major contributor to raising awareness of ESD was the collaboration with the HEA and their Green Academy Project, which helped to gain momentum by using the annual Learning and Teaching Conference to promote the topic. As a result Howard highlights:

"That was quite useful 'cause it helped to mobilize some momentum in terms of what we did as a University" (Howard)

It did not only raise awareness but was a major force to contribute towards the learning and teaching strategy, in which the importance of ESD was incorporated as one of five cornerstones in educating global citizens. Both Howard and Raj have been integral in working on the learning and teaching strategy, with Howard developing ESD within the document. It is acknowledged that there are 'pockets of good practice' across the institution, but that they are rather isolated and it proves difficult to change this.

"So it's identifying the pockets. There is a strategic remit in the L&T strategy. It [SD] is part of the corporate plan. So from a vision point of view we are steering in that direction. But it's just a resource issue to actually make it happen" (Howard)

The learning and teaching strategy in particular lays out ESD as a strategic goal to raise student awareness, staff engagement, and collaboration across the University. Howard explains that:

"We got it [ESD] into the learning and teaching strategy as a priority this time and that was an outcome of the HEA. ...that was an achievement to get it recognised in a strategy. So we're all having to push towards it" (Howard)

Across all strategies and policy documents, a range of terms are used to refer to sustainability education, starting with ESD itself, citizenship, SD and others. Frequent changes in the use of different terms to suit the strategic message conveyed were apparent while analysing documents and website content. However, all interviewees referred to and were comfortable, with the use of terminology used within the interviews. The interviewees conveyed a familiarity and understanding with ESD that was used as the overarching keyword by four of the interviewees,

Overall, the strategic and policy documents are environmentally focused, looking predominantly at operational and estates practices such as carbon reduction and the achievement of top BREEAM rating (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) of all buildings new and old<sup>50</sup>. Despite the positive rating there appear to be inconsistencies of buildings across campus, with the business school lacking green energy measuring systems as Lennard reveals.

"It always struck me... isn't it strange that they didn't put any sustainable energy measures in there" (Lennard)

#### 4.2.3.2 Teaching and Research

The involvement with the HEA led to an increased focus on ESD and its use as a strategic tool in the annual learning and teaching conference. In addition, an audit of all modules was carried out to establish the degree of sustainability content in the University curricula. This included terminology used and areas that were not specifically labelled as ESD. Results showed that

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<sup>50</sup> BREEAM is an environmental assessment tool used to design and construct environmentally friendly and sustainable buildings. Through an assessment organisations can enhance their buildings and achieve a rating that distinguishes their environmental and sustainable building and construction (BRE Group, 2016)

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individuals across the whole University engage to some extent with sustainability related content in their teaching. Raj who oversaw the survey points out that the University wanted to:

“analyse how many students were having an experience with ESD in the University, by basically going to every module in the University and looking for evidence of it. ...I think it was about 11% [of students], having some kind of experience of it [ESD]. Though it might not be called that at all” (Raj)

The results of the survey came as a surprise as Howard notes that expectations were lower. He points out that results were:

“Quietly high...it was higher than we thought. But it's still very low in the big scheme of things” (Howard)

Modules containing SD or relating to the concept in any shape or form can be found across the business school curriculum from first year UGs to taught Masters programmes. All four academics integrate SD elements into their teaching to varying degrees depending on the modules taught, with some modules specifically covering SD. Some courses incorporate various aspects of sustainability and the environmental aspects within several modules. Students are introduced to relevant concepts early on in their first year of study, followed by additional modules in year two and three. Howard explains:

“Level 1 is the introductory, level 2 is theory, level 3 is practical application” (Howard)

Business modules are complemented by assessments that focus on the practical application of the content taught. This can include the attendance of conferences, or organisation of events for the Green Academy group on campus. Undergraduates engage with SD throughout their studies as pointed out below:

“By the time that they get to Level 3, they are writing [industry specific] strategy documents and doing very applied stuff, podcasts, going out talking to industry” (Howard)

Howard, Lennard and Sheldon teach various UG and PG (taught) modules across the business school however their approach to SD differs. While Howard and Lennard have a long standing interest in sustainability, which can be seen in their teaching and background, Sheldon does not directly approach SD in his teaching or use of prevalent terminology. He does however include aspects of what he calls ‘sustainable behaviour’ and identifies SD more in terms of good practice, which he sees as “an extension to good operational practice” (Sheldon).

Somewhat detached from the other participants Raj teaches predominantly UGs and PGs in his field. He also supervises PhD students, two of whom are researching SD related issues, and incorporates green issues in his teaching where possible. However, only a small part of his teaching is directly focusing on SD issues. One module in particular, incorporates environmental issues however, its optional status raises issues of students signing up. He also leads the Green Academy project at the University to increase student engagement with SD issues. Moreover, by collaborating with a colleague from another department he had the opportunity to take part in various educational fieldtrips related to nature and tourism. Other factors facilitating ESD integration are the University's learning and teaching resource pages that Howard is building up and overseeing.

Case Study A is teaching rather than research focused. In the past few years, the University has started putting more emphasis on research, with the strategy emphasising to raise the research profile and that of all academic staff. The University has joined the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and is planning to increase its research activity across departments and schools to foster inter and cross-disciplinary work among academics. This change can be seen in the increased expectation towards academics to publish. However, according to Lennard:

“The University pays a lot of lip service to research and... we are supposed to be all active researchers. ...and that's the official line. There is a divorce in... between this course and the reality really” (Lennard)

Within the business school, a research profile is build up on existing projects and their further expansion. However, due to its size the department and its research efforts are still on a small scale. Considering that only a small group of individuals are engaging with SD, this narrows down relevant research even more. One driving force is research staff solely focusing on building up the research profile. The recent focus on research activities is also reflected in all four interviews with academics who state that they all undertake research, either REF related or practice based, however on different scales and with different priorities. Enquiring about his research activity one participant responded:

“What research? Don't do it. I don't have time. This is my biggest challenge. It's cause it's practice...the research...it depends what you define by research. If you are after REF submission and writing papers, no” (Howard).

This view is supported by Lennard, who admittedly struggles to undertake research too.

“I’m finding that I’m struggling to have time for publication, for research. I did publish a paper. I got published at the beginning of March this year. But it was really old stuff that... I’ve been trying to get published for a while” (Lennard)

While the research output is still developing, it is obvious that academics at the business school are more industry led and closely involved with local and regional businesses in consultancy projects. As pointed out by Howard the University’s definition of research does not merely focus on academic publications, but includes non-academic research too. All three (Howard, Lennard and Sheldon) highlighted their strong engagement as practitioners, consulting and supporting local businesses. Howard went on to explain that:

“Research output, from an RE [Research Excellence] perspective, it is probably not as strong as it should be. But from a consultancy doing all the industry stuff and making that, it’s as good as anybody else’s” (Howard)

In order to strengthen the research profile, one of the next strategic steps in the pipeline is the establishment of a research centre dedicated to technology and sustainability. The proposed centre has been granted funding and planning permission and is awaiting completion.

“Within that [centre] there will be an institute for sustainable enterprise... It’ll include a department for data science, but then a department for sustainability, and we’re starting to work up the programmes that that would include” (Sheldon)

#### **4.2.3.3 Good Practice**

The individuals and few groups involved in SD are referred to as ‘pockets of good practice’ by the interviewees. It is these key individuals who were involved in the creation of a learning and teaching strategy, who are actively engaging with business and local governments, to operationalize ideas and acquire funding to organize dedicated SD events, as well as keeping the projects up. Pockets of good practice are relatively small compared to the whole University.

Lennard explains that:

“You get these fantastic people that are really committed to sustainability and that are really driving... making things happen and wanting to make things happen and then you find these huge contradictions of people... that would pay lip service to being sustainable” (Lennard)

What connects all participants is an interest in the subject area, even though the degree of interest, active engagement and their approach to SD varies greatly among the interviewees. Table 4.5 shows an overview of different areas of engagement with ESD and each participants' involvement. Interviewees show, in particular, an engagement in the areas of teaching and student engagement, as indicated by the ticks in the table.

Table 4.5 Participant Engagement with SD – Case A

	Research	Teaching	Campus Projects	Community Projects	Business Collaborations	LD Provision
Howard	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lennard	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓
Sheldon	✓	✓	?	?	✓	x
Raj	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Penny	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Engaged | x = Not engaged | ? = Not known

#### 4.2.4 Challenges of ESD Integration

The main barriers or challenges to integrate SD into the institution's curricula, not just business, can be summarized as a lack of resources, mainly time and funding, and engagement of academics and students. Others include understanding and awareness of the concept, a lack of top-down support, collaboration with the student union and academic freedom.

##### 4.2.4.1 Staff Engagement

A low interest and engagement spans across University departments on all levels. Staff engagement is a major issue mentioned by all interviewees, and one that raises continuous debates on how, and what can be done to engage academics, raise their interest in SD and keep the momentum of integration going. At present only a few small groups across the University (see section 4.2.3.3) are actively engaged with ESD and related areas, within the business school it is predominantly the participants interviewed. It is evident that a lack of engagement poses an issue as mentioned by two interviewees below:

“The challenge we have at the moment is engagement” (Howard)

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“One of the challenges is engaging staff in sustainable...in the sustainability agenda. That doesn't mean to say they are not interested” (Sheldon)

As the only active ESD enthusiast in his department (Humanities) Raj is working in collaboration with all interviewees and points out:

“I'm the only one who's doing it really... my Head of Department is sympathetic but he's got so many other things on his plate that... that it's not a priority” (Raj)

The business school appears to have a higher number of academics with an interest in sustainability issues, a specifically designed course and modules that integrate the concept to varying degrees (see section 4.2.3.2). In the grand scheme of things, the number of ESD advocates is still reasonably small with just a few active staff members who are also involved in plans for the new research centre as pointed out by Sheldon.

“I've engaged the staff within this department in the discussion around... creating the centre for sustainable business. OK, so I've got at this point in time at least seven or eight members of staff that are interested in pursuing that agenda to the point that we've worked it out together” (Sheldon)

Engagement with other SD projects also varies between the participants themselves. At the time of the interview the Green Campus group, consisted of only five students, two academics (Howard and Raj), and one support staff (Penny).

Academics' interest in ESD comes down to individuals regardless what department and school they work in. It appears that some academics, even though not actively pursuing sustainability, naturally incorporate related content in their modules and teaching without labelling them, or show a personal interest in related themes and sustainable behaviour. Sheldon explains that:

“There's all sorts of levels of engagement and some of it just being aware. Some of it sort of...I use the recycling bin. For others it's starting to incorporate it within curricula. And so... there's different levels of engagement” (Sheldon)

Through his work on learning and teaching, Howard frequently communicates with staff across the University and confirms the above comment made by Sheldon saying that:

“What you find is that half the time people are doing it” (Howard)

While there seems to be a more subconscious interest in SD, it is unclear who has an actual interest in the subject and actively involves with it and who does not have an interest at all, or as Lennard explains who 'walks the talk'. He continues pointing out:

"I would like to think of myself as one of the people that... do the talk but also do the walk in terms of being sustainable. ...you find a lot of people that do the talk, but actually it's just talk. They... always say 'oh sustainability is the most important thing' but... they're actions show you... that they don't act in a sustainable manner" (Lennard)

Staff engagement is influenced by various factors and starts with individuals' personal interest in, and attitude towards sustainability. However, an interest does not mean that individuals are actively involved with the ESD agenda. Sheldon for example has an interest in sustainability and emphasizes its importance, but sees it as common sense and therefore, naturally incorporates it without labelling it as such.

"If you are interested in business and from an operations perspective you know sustainable activity to my mind is just an extension of really good operations/manufacturing management. ...a lot of it is around good practice. It's about good practice in terms of efficient lean production, good practice in terms of staff motivation and you know waste management" (Sheldon)

Efforts to raise awareness among academics beyond the existing enthusiasts go very much unnoticed, as evidenced in low numbers of attendance and participation in dedicated events. Previous events on sustainability, such as the ESD themed Learning and Teaching Conference and sustainability related workshops, have shown little interest by academics other than the ones already involved.

"And that's our challenge. There's lots of goodwill, but from a very small group... It's the same old people. And we never seem to get the critical mass of people actually coming along. It comes back to that engagement issues as well" (Howard)

Where there is an interest, it proves difficult to keep the momentum going beyond organizing events that are perceived by staff as one-off, rather than an ongoing commitment. The challenge the business school faces is how academics can be motivated to engage with ESD as explained by Howard and Raj below:

"Apart from the stuff that we're doing, it's very difficult and ...that's the question that's on my agenda... how do we motivate staff to be involved. 'Cause that's the challenge we are having" (Howard)

"The difficulty since then [the L&T Conference] has been how to push that forward in terms of getting academics to engage with it" (Raj)

All participants actively engage on various levels, some more some less intense. This also refers to communicating and disseminating good practice, as well as collaborations with colleagues within the business school and other departments/schools.

#### **4.2.4.2 Student Engagement**

Engagement is an equally pressing issue among students. In 2015, the institution focused on students as partners, bringing them to the forefront of engaging and shaping their learning environment however, with little effect. The lack of involvement raises questions as to why and how students do not show any interest in sustainability activities. Despite the integration into some modules in the business school, the student voice and commitment to take part in projects and initiatives is missing. Howard points out:

“It’s very difficult to do things... this whole thematic for us this year is about students as partners. But it’s very difficult to do things when they don’t materialise. And that’s our challenge” (Howard)

Even where dedicated students train to be student ambassadors to spread the word across the student community, engagement by individuals is taken up differently as indicated by Penny.

“I think we’ve trained about 10 students as Student Ambassadors. But we’ve got... probably got only four or five who are really into it and who have pushed it through the community” (Penny)

The above is further exacerbated through the absence of a green student society, or group on campus and support by the Students Union (SU) to promote student involvement with sustainability. Although the SU has an appointed Environmental Officer, interviewees face the same issue, a lack of engagement or different priorities. This can be broken down as far as difficulties in making contact with the representative and the effective communication and collaboration to promote events and activities, in order to raise student awareness. Howard states:

“The Student Union has an Environment Officer, but we don’t see them” (Howard)

This view is supported by others who have experienced difficulties in involving students and the SU, describing the collaboration efforts as problematic. The underlying reason as Raj explains is:

"We had quite a lot of problems getting the Student Union involved... Well, the students here are a-political. ...they're not very engaged politically... basically the Student Union generally" (Raj)

Despite previous issues and a lack of 'joint up thinking', Penny is hopeful that this will change with the appointment of a new Student Engagement Manager.

"If I'm honest we've struggled a little bit in the past but this year the Student Union have got a Student Engagement Manager or something like that... and he's very good at pulling it all together. It's been a bit disjointed but I think moving forward with him we will probably do better" (Penny)

#### 4.2.4.3 Resources

Academic engagement in the business school is affected by different factors. Resources such as time and funding, present considerable obstacles in engagement for all interviewees. Where staff actively engage with the topic area, one of the biggest challenges comes down to time, due to existing workloads. Raj explains:

"I suppose my my slight sort of issue is that they don't really give us the resources. I haven't got a lot of time to give to it [sustainability] 'cause I've got so many other things that I've got to do." (Raj)

Therefore, it is important as Sheldon notes that:

"We have to understand what interests them [academics] and how we get them engaged. A lot of the issues are around time. So we need to find time for people to engage. So time, motivation, helping them to understand the broader opportunity and the broader benefit" (Sheldon)

It was also observed that interviewees' responsibilities included additional roles and tasks throughout the school or University, which added to their workload, while leaving little or no time for SD involvement or research in general as pointed out by three of the interviewees.

"If you see what's actually happening on the ground... now I have... 20 odd kids that I need to see a total of... five times or two times a year and all sort of nonsense that really is not helping me to do my job properly. Hey ho, that's the conflicts that the University has really" (Lennard)

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“That’s the point in this place that they...give you a full work and then expect you to do everything else on top of that as well. And that’s... a challenge fitting it all in (Howard)

“I mean here the attitude is you... just do it as well as everything else, which is quite difficult because... I can’t find a lot of time to commit to it [ESD]” (Raj)

As a result, the interest tends to die down quickly with academics having to focus on their existing responsibilities. Conflicting schedules and lack of time have also proven challenging to getting everyone around a table, which also involves traveling between two campuses. Further cause for concern is also related to time of dedicated sustainability positions. With Penny employed on a part-time basis, her involvement in ESD events across the University is limited, on top of her already demanding work schedule. She explains that:

“I only do 26 hours. ...I think the Universities that have been successful for example with Green Impact are those that have got one person just working on Green Impact. No other environmental issues at all, just Green Impact. And I think if we had someone like that we could probably do far more than we can at the moment ‘cause my time gets divided between [various projects] and all the rest of it... environmental management system for example, writing the strategy documents,... all kind of stuff” (Penny)

Issues also arise with regard to a lack of funding for SD related, but also other projects.

“There is no money in the system. It’d be really great to be able to say ‘oh look we have a learning and teaching development fund and we’re gonna use it to support ESD development’. But there’s nothing there” (Howard)

As the business school has a close link to local/regional businesses and other organisations, sources for funding are widened through individuals’ networking and projects they attend to. In particular, Howard is actively involved with businesses, local associations and governments, and sits on various boards to promote SD related issues and potentially reap future funding benefits for the business school.

“You’re always constantly aware of where the funding is coming from. You’re much more aware externally. Where could we get money from to do that? Where could [we] get some sponsorship? Could we get [Company XYZ] whose based down the road to possibly sponsor something for us? That’s why I’m on the group [local association] because I’m just biding my time” (Howard)

Interviewees make do with the allocated funding available. Although some, as reiterated by Penny, might be available at an ad-hoc basis.

"We don't have a massive budget of course. So generally, I tend to go to conferences that are free, and there are quite a few of them around... webinars that are free. It's the balance I suppose from my point of view. I'm sure if I said can I go to this conference and it was £500 it'd be no problem. But it's a balance between my time... as well" (Penny)

Resources finally also include the provision of infrastructure and tools to facilitate individuals work. Through a lack of support and resources from the IT department, it has proven time consuming to extend the internal Moodle pages, managed by Howard, who manually has to add hundreds of interested individuals to a mailing list, leaving him rather frustrated.

#### 4.2.4.4 Communication of Good Practice

Strategic information and documents are all available on the institutions' website. While there is a general awareness of participants on the institutions ESD strategies, there is a lack of more in depths knowledge on the actual documents, good practice and specific plans. This is reflected in comments such as that of Sheldon:

"I'm not sure. I have to say I'm not sure whether... as a strategic level the 2020 vision has anything in on sustainability. I suspect it does but... I am not sure... it'll be within the estates component" (Sheldon)

An exception is Howard who was the main driving force behind the learning and teaching strategy, and the ESD components contained, hence is well aware of the strategies and their content. He also emerges as the driving force within the business school. He is actively communicating good practice, is engaging with staff and students throughout the institution and networks with local businesses and governments. His efforts are supported by Raj in a variety of cross campus activities.

There is also a lack of communication between individual departments, as well as the interview participants. Where interviewees collaborated, there were limits of sharing information and good practice other than the projects worked on. In particular, this refers to not keeping academics in the loop on how they can contribute to the ESD agenda and staying in touch by for example answering emails, which adds to a loss of interest and frustration. With new plans to open a research centre, there appears to be no strategy to keep staff informed on these developments.

"I wonder if there's actually anything happening. So obviously, when those things happen I certainly am not being kept in the loop. But my impression is that that nothing is happening at the moment really" (Lennard)

The absence of communication on the research centre is also evident in the limited knowledge of staff in other departments or the other campus. Both Raj and Penny comment that:

“I’d be interested to know what they’re doing. ...it’s completely out of my area and I don’t really hear much about it, and it’s on the other campus you know. But it’d be interesting to know what they’re doing” (Raj)

“I don’t know much about that to be fair. I don’t know a great deal about that. Howard’s probably more involved in that” (Penny)

#### **4.2.4.5 Academic Role and Academic Freedom**

The academic role or profession has changed over the years with increasing responsibilities (see section 2.6.5) and a greater specialisation in subject areas. Particularly the latter has been described as a hindrance to collaborate across departments, as individuals are stuck in their areas of research. One of the interviewees specified that:

“A lot of academics, for very good reasons, are in their ghetto you know their bunker of their subject, ‘cause that’s what their career is made you know. That’s the problem in part of academic careers that you... have to specialise more and more” (Raj)

There is an overall agreement among the participants that engaging academics with topics outside of their specialisation or interest, here SD, by potentially imposing it unto them can lead to resistance and suspicion that it impinges on their freedom to research and teach. Both Raj and Penny disclosed that:

“It always comes back to the touchy subject of it, the kind of independence of academics to pursue their own agendas without the University telling them what to do too much. So that’s [a] kind of very touchy area, I’ve discovered” (Raj)

“We also can’t force them of course to put sustainability into the curriculum, because it’s up to them how they develop their resources for the curriculum. So that’s the other issue we have really with it, is trying to get their buy in” (Penny)

Encroaching on staff’s academic freedom is not seen as a desirable course of action within the University and that participants are wary about. Penny goes on by adding:

“I’m told that’s not the way we can work... I sort of think with something like that, unless you actually make it... in my mind it needs to be in everyone’s job description” (Penny)

A common ground needs to be found to encourage staff members to engage with ESD, illustrate its opportunities and benefits without patronising and pressing individuals. Howard and Sheldon formulate it as follows:

“Now what we want people is, to come out of the wood work naturally, so they don’t feel like it’s been imposed on them. And it’s how we do that. We haven’t cracked that one yet” (Howard)

“Phew...we have to enthuse them first... We have to understand what interests them and how we get them engaged” (Sheldon)

In order to break down current barriers of interaction between academics, Raj suggests:

“Encouraging people... to take it on board in whatever way it’s suitable for their discipline. And also trying to get over the idea that somehow it’s about preaching to people, which I don’t think it is at all. It’s about critical engagement of these ideas” (Raj)

#### 4.2.5 Institutional Support

Support for academics to engage with ESD can be translated in several ways, starting with the strategic direction the institution is taking and the tone set from the Vice Chancellor, heads of department and schools, peer-to-peer support, learning and development as well as resources provided. When the interview participants were asked if they felt adequately supported in integrating SD into the curricula, four out of the five respondents answered ‘YES’, while one responded answered with ‘NO’, and one who felt supported in some and not supported in other aspects. A closer look at the individual replies in the following sections disseminates the factors of support.

Table 4.6 Support of Academics – Case A

Do you feel adequately supported in integrating SD into the curriculum and furthering your SD knowledge/skills?	
Howard	Yes
Lennard	Yes/No
Sheldon	Yes
Raj	No
Penny	Yes

The perception of adequate support varies among the interviewees, but all three Howard, Sheldon and Penny report that they feel supported in what they are doing.

“Oh the support is there. There is support from the top. At a local level, it’s embedded in. I get the support of my department that we can do that and we can encourage students to be green. Institutionally we are just challenged by the challenge of higher education at minute.” (Howard)

As the Head of School Sheldon’s perception differs from the provision other academic staff would expect. A part of his role includes the provision of support to other academics in the business school, highlighted through the inclusion of staff in discussing the new research centre. He perceives support provided to him from a strategic perspective emphasising:

“In terms of the strategic developments yeah absolutely” (Sheldon)

Like Sheldon, Penny provides support to others, mainly staff from the estates team, through training (see section 4.2.6) and multiple projects that run across the University to raise sustainability awareness, as well as her participation on various committee and interest groups. She is equally satisfied with the support given to her mentioning that:

“I mean the University are very good and if there’s conferences I wanted to go to they would... sponsor that. That’s not an issue at all. But that’s down to me to make those decisions really” (Penny)

Lennard and Raj are somewhat split on the subject of support and their satisfaction on the help provided to them by explaining:

“I’m personally really pleased with... Sheldon being Head of School really. And obviously that will be...that will be fantastic for the... Centre for Sustainability as well. I definitely feel supported at school level. What happens beyond the school level is something that really... it’s a bigger agenda that is not driven by us most of the time really” (Lennard)

“We’re supported in a sense that they sympathize with it. But I don’t feel very supported in the sense that they’re putting anything in resources in” (Raj)

#### 4.2.5.1 Strategy and Leadership

The 'Environment and Sustainable Development Strategy' underlines the institutions plan to becoming more sustainable, although most policies focus on green issues rather than education. In a separate strategy on learning and teaching however, ESD appears in the broader spectrum of 'Global Citizenship', which widens the focus on the subject (see section 4.2.3.1).

Recognising the importance of the concept to facilitate its understanding across the institution, as well as dedicating a whole teaching and learning conference to ESD, is described as a big achievement (see section 4.2.3.1). Additionally, it is anticipated that the strategic direction and establishment of the new research centre will have a positive impact on ESD integration.

"At the moment in the University, there's a lot of push...how do you get ESD embedded into the curriculum. And we are hoping that this redevelopment will give it a little bit of a push in terms of what's the best way of actually doing it" (Howard)

Albeit a change in strategy to establish a technology based research centre, not all interviewees agree with the direction the University is taking.

"I get the impression really that with this science and tech park the University is trying to ride this kind of wave of the... STEM subjects importance for University... I think we're riding that wave a little bit behind really" (Lennard)

Nevertheless, it seems that there is a lack of strategic focus from the top, albeit various policy documents in place and an ESD provision in the learning and teaching strategy. Sheldon explains that:

"There is a strategy, which... essentially positions the University at the heart of education, lead regeneration of the region. ...at this point in time there isn't a stated strategy that says we're going to move into a sustainable led curricula" (Sheldon)

In line with these concerns, more specific measures need to be introduced to manifest SD into the University strategy and other policy documents, but also move towards operational issues into education. One suggestion is:

"I think somehow we need some kind of declaration from the top that sustainability will be incorporated into all curriculum modules somewhere, as far as possible. And we need some way of developing that 'cause I'm sure if everyone was told they had to do it they would do it" (Penny)

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Further to existing strategies, institutional support is provided by the Vice Chancellor who is also chairing on the 'Economic, Environment and Sustainability Committee' that also provides "an element of top-down [support] through the...Vice-Chancellor" (Howard). Likewise, Sheldon acknowledges his own position as Deputy Head to engage academics and his close collaboration with senior management to implement strategic objectives.

"A lot of the work that I did was incorporated in the strategic economic plan, which went to Government, has resulted in funds and we'll just start to drive what [the initiative] is looking to do" (Sheldon)

Involvement with ESD is not a given across departments and schools and neither is the support of other Heads of School. As a lone wolf in his department trying to persuade others about the usefulness of ESD Raj explained:

"[My] Head of Department is sympathetic, but he's got so many other things on his plate... that it's not a priority I don't think" (Raj)

All interviewees are on various working groups within the University, whether it is Green Campus, Health and Safety or the Sustainable Development and Environment Steering Committee, hence influencing the senior executive team, including the Vice Chancellor in terms of strategic direction and policy. However, a more critical view suggests that the University is taking too much of a short-term approach. Lennard explains:

"I guess the University... perhaps doesn't understand the long-term priorities and is at the moment very very very short-termist, focusing on what makes money right now and what doesn't make money right now, rather than thinking of the long-term future" (Lennard)

He even goes as far as saying:

"It's probably gonna sound very harsh but I would say the University as an institution I don't think is a very sustainable institution. And... they tend to get on Sustainability when it's good for the budget. I would say the Sustainable agenda is is being driven by champions in each local area, rather than by institutional philosophy that everyone believes in to and everyone has signed up to" (Lennard)

### 4.2.5.2 Resources

Academics have the freedom to engage with areas of interest, teach, integrate the concept and work on relevant courses. Any further engagement beyond their existing work and initiatives is

dependent on resources such as time and funding, which already presents itself as an issue, and furthers a lack of staff engagement (see section 4.2.4). Raj sums the Universities support up below:

“In some ways the University is very democratic in the sense that they just let you do it.  
[But] they just expect...they’re thinking Stuart, Howard and I are doing it” (Raj)

However, all three Lennard, Howard and Raj hold the view that a greater top-down drive is needed to back enthusiasts, which is further backed by freeing up time and making funds available for academics to pursue ESD activities. Suggestions to improve the support include additional sabbatical positions or employ dedicated staff who act as change agents (Howard), strengthen the strategy and policies (Lennard), and as mentioned above provide adequate resources such as time and funding.

#### **4.2.5.3      Peer to Peer Support**

Support among colleagues appears to be distinct between academics who have an interest in SD. In the business school this translates to the pocket of good practice, so the participants interviewed and a few other staff. Their collaboration extends beyond the business school in working with Penny and Raj. Howard in particular advises colleagues in the whole University on learning and teaching related matters through his split position, and ultimately has a wide reach to get in touch and communicate with individuals. In addition, he is a point of contact for colleagues within the school who require advice or help and actively works on bids for funding with Sheldon (Howard), while at the same time managing the Universities learning and teaching Moodle pages with an extensive section on ESD.

The influence of peer support and collaboration can be seen in the praise of interviewees about working with each other. In cooperating with his business colleagues and another co-worker Raj recognizes the impact these collaborations had and new avenues it has opened for him to teach in different ways. He commends in particular one colleague saying:

“He’s really encouraged me to push the boundaries of what I’m doing, doing it in a different way. ...trying to think outside the usual structure of how I work” (Raj)

Equally, Lennard praises Sheldon as a Head of School who is straight forward, gets work done and takes a long-term view to changes, as opposed to his predecessor who he describes as “a bit of a politician, in the sense that... he was a conflict avoider”. Peer to peer support is to be increased

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with the new research centre in which experts will be employed to lead and manage. Sheldon notes:

“We’ll bring people in who are experts in the field to make things like that [training] happen” (Sheldon)

### 4.2.6 The Role of Learning and Development

Engagement with ESD is taking place predominantly among interested individuals, leaving any learning and development to them alone. On asking how participants stay up-to-date with SD knowledge, it emerged that they are mostly using traditional ways (informal means) of academic learning (see Table 4.7)

Table 4.7 Development of SD Knowledge and Skills – Case A

How do you stay up-to-date and develop your SD knowledge and skills?				
Howard	Lennard	Sheldon	Raj	Penny
Talking and collaborating with employers <b>HEA</b> training <b>Sustainability</b> Destination Management	Reading, Networking Conferences	Being aware Reading Listening <b>Watching</b> Research Good practice	Reading Research <b>HEA</b> training	Conferences <b>Webinars</b> Sustainable procurement training

Learning and development among (not only but also) business academics, occurs predominantly through informal and more traditional means such as reading in the relevant field, conferences, and collaborations and networking with colleagues and businesses. The latter is highly supported in terms of employability of students through the focus on ‘enterprise’, a vehicle that raises staff attention. In taking the experience and success of enterprise as a guide to putting sustainability into practice Sheldon explained that:

“If you translate that across into a sustainability agenda, we need to understand what does sustainability mean within the context... [of] that student group and staff. And then

effectively talk to them and engage them in the discussion and then start to work out how might we include that in the curriculum." (Sheldon)

In a more formal approach, the University has a number of learning and development opportunities (referred to as staff development), offered by the Human Resources (HR) department. The training catalogue contains skills based workshops, research, teaching and learning seminars for staff in leading positions, health and safety, but also a section on sustainability. Citizenship and sustainability are mentioned as key themes in the learning and teaching seminars, and are also included in a lecture series (with other key themes), available for both staff and students.

Sustainability is further mentioned with reference to upcoming events and schemes offered, training on sustainable procurement, environmental management and a one-day training that incorporates the use of global citizenship and sustainability, and how these themes can be integrated into teaching and ultimately foster understanding and critical thinking. The staff development programme offers a workshop to academics to introduce them to integrating ESD into their teaching, led by Howard. However, this training is voluntary in nature and lacks the number of attendees. As Howard exclaims:

"We are trying to do green stuff for staff, as part of the staff development. And it's just the same old issue, with actually getting numbers, thumps on seats" (Howard)

In addition to the training provision, all staff can also access the teaching and learning Moodle page to further their development.

"We have this web based L&T resource... lots and lots of resources and there's a big ESD section in it... that we keep up-to-date, with all the latest HEA guidance notes and documents and suggested reading and tips for teaching" (Howard)

Although interviewees mainly agree that time and funding pose serious issues in ESD integration, their perceptions on the overall support provided by their school, but also the institution as a whole differ. A statement by one of the participants, who has worked at the University for nearly two decades, highlights the importance of one's own involvement and motivation in terms of being supported by the school and University.

"And the beauty of this place is, if you have a bit of initiative and you wanna do something, that's gonna enhance the student experience, pretty much you have free reign to do it" (Howard)

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Whatever the involvement, ultimately a lack of time to pursue and funding to operationalize SD projects impede further widening of the ESD agenda. A possible solution mentioned is the creation of a position, in which an individual is dedicated to ESD integration (or alternatively the temporary appointment of a change agent), taking this additional task off the current academics driving the agenda and acting as a link between the different parties across the University. However, this leads back to funding, which is an already existing problem outlined.

### 4.2.6.1 ESD Learning and Development

In probing how interviewees perceive a more formal approach to learning and development to support business academics in integrating ESD, responses are mixed and highlight the lack of numbers to attend for example the training by Howard already offered. All interviewees are aware of the challenges, in particular time, funding and other resources to free academics. However, there is a reluctance to put a higher emphasis on formal and possibly mandatory ESD learning and development opportunities within the existing staff development programme, or potentially induction for new academics, as it might put them off considering that they already attend to different agendas. Rather than pushing ESD training and the agenda in more general, the interviewees highlight the importance of allowing academics to “come out of the woodwork naturally” (Howard). Moreover, training by some is said to be:

“important but action doesn’t often result from training”, but rather to “engage people in a conversation and training might be a part of that” (Sheldon)

Although opinions on ESD training and induction for new employees differ, there is an overall consensus that a more forceful approach infringes on academic freedom and hence, any actions need to be voluntary for academics. Any mandatory approaches are believed to lead staff to try to get them out of the way quickly rather than engaging deeply with them. Lennard believes that:

“It would probably be one of the... boxes that people would tick and... for some people that are convinced that will be nice to know and they probably engage with it, and... for many people it would be another box tick that they would probably ignore (Lennard)

This view is shared by Penny who highlights that:

“Where they’re [staff] not particularly interested we’ve got no carrot or stick really I suppose, no incentive or... something to make them go. We can’t force them to go”  
(Penny)

While not averse to a formal training structure Penny highlights aforementioned issues:

“The issue we have again is peoples’ time. So, the staff development programme is there and people say yeah I’m interested in that but I don’t really have the time to go. So, the issue we have is getting people to give up their time to go and train. That’s... one of the issues we have” (Penny)

## 4.3 Case Study B

### 4.3.1 Institutional Background

Case Study B is part of a post 1992 University and spans a history of over 150 years. Like Case A, the institution has a history in teacher training and is small, with a student population of > 10.000. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research degrees, covering various subject areas like social and human sciences, business, law, and arts.

The institution prides itself on its strong values and theological influences that guide everything it does. This is notable in the business school and its teaching and research, established with an ethos of responsibility in mind. The People and Planet University League Table 2017 ranks the institution in the ‘2:1 class category’, which shows an improvement in the place over the past few years.

Table 4.8 University Facts – Case B

Size	Areas of Study	People & Planet League Ranking	Domicile of Students
<10000	Arts Humanities & Social Sciences Business/Management Law	2.1 Class Category (2017)	94% UK/EU 6% Overseas

### 4.3.2 Participants’ Backgrounds and ESD Interest

Six semi-structured interviews were undertaken, of which five included staff from the business school and one included a member of support staff who occupies a sustainability position in the estates department at the University. All interviewees have some SD involvement, with some

individuals showing a more active interest than others. Table 4.9 provides an overview of the interviewees and their respective area.

Table 4.9 Profile of Participants – Case B

	Pseudonym	Gender	Area
1	Chandler	Male	Business School
2	Ross	Male	Business School
3	Monika	Female	Business School
4	Rachel	Female	Business School
5	Joey	Male	Business School
6	Phoebe	Female	Estates

Interviewees come from a range of professional backgrounds, covering teaching, in and outside of HE, environmental sciences, retail, banking and finance and others (see Figure 4.2). The majority of the interviewees have gained a wide experience, and started out in industry related careers before they joined HE. Four out of the six interviewees have had a longstanding interest in sustainability aspects, with two who have gained an interest since starting work at the University.



Figure 4.2 Background of Participants – Case B

With the diverse backgrounds of the interviewees in mind, their interest in sustainability has developed differently over time. Table 4.10 shows that all interviewees' attitudes on SD related issues can be linked back to overall similar values that are based on fairness, justice and responsibility towards the environment they are working in.

Table 4.10 Participants' Interest in SD/ESD – Case B

How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?	
<b>Chandler</b>	"Where as much as I was fighting the tide elsewhere to say that things need to be done differently, I wouldn't put that under the heading of responsible management by the way. Just under the need for change umbrella. ...I've come to pick up responsibility over the years as they've passed by."
<b>Ross</b>	"...at the time because they demanded that we had...that suppliers had offshore facilities. And I remember at the time,...I mean I had no idea about CSR...but I remember at the time thinking that that was... questionable, because what they were saying was basically, you've got to basically have a sweatshop somewhere. You've got to make stuff cheaply. And I remember at the time thinking that that was at best disingenuous, then at worst it was just down right dishonest." ... "I also remember setting up workers councils and working out pension arrangements and whatever, which was unusual at the time. But I guess it was just my own personal kind of...attitude towards it."

How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?	
<b>Monika</b>	"I believe I'm very passionate about creating and bringing values in my...well in my private/professional life but also in my class... looking at my students because I feel that...I feel that the most important thing when we teach sustainable issues is creating, bringing values, creating values...not just...just to fulfil assessment requirements." ... "[It] just developed...developing long-term values in their life and their future career, what they [students] are going to do in their future life."
<b>Rachel</b>	"It tapped into some long-standing values that I've had from...ever since my childhood. And having gone through the whole banking thing, seen the commercial environment, I sort of felt, I was able to actually say what I really felt. Probably, you know, for the first time in a professional environment."
<b>Joey</b>	"The honest answer here to your question is, at the time I had absolutely no interest in ethics whatsoever, but I saw it as a positive answer to give in an interview to get a job... I think it's fair to say that if I hated it and it bored me, I probably wouldn't have kept doing it for this long... And I'm happy to do it because I'm interested enough in it to do that. Is it something that I'm really interested in? Probably not."
<b>Phoebe</b>	"...when I was a teenager...I remember thinking oh God things are so bad out there. What can I do to make things better in some way? We really can't just carry on, you know, being excessive consumers of everything. So... that's why I suppose I got into it that way...feeling that there's perhaps a more... an ethical argument for it."

#### 4.3.3 ESD Integration

The University prides itself on its long-standing values that inform the institutions overall strategy. SD integration takes place in all areas from administration, learning and teaching, research, operations and external engagement with the community and business. The business school in particular has a strong focus on SD with an associated research centre. The institution is small in nature with a focus on teaching and learning.

##### 4.3.3.1 University Strategy and Operations

Case B has adopted a long-term strategy that is strongly guided by its values and institutional history. The emphasis lies on teaching, research and sustainability, themes that run throughout the whole institution. Within the overarching strategic framework the Vice Chancellor highlights that the University works for the overall greater good, a position that goes beyond the institutional aims and objectives. This is to be achieved by educating students to become well-rounded citizens who go above and beyond to shape the society and environment they live in.

The responsibility assumed in the main strategy is supported by sub strategies on equality, diversity, dignity at work, and LGBT, among others. The open and inclusive approach adopted by Case B, translates into raising awareness and leading through good practice such as through projects with and engagement in the local community, volunteering and other charitable activities of staff and students. Moreover, this is supported in the HR strategy that seeks to embed the Universities values in recruiting, developing and supporting present and new staff members.

Sustainability is a key theme within the University's strategy. Not only is its aim to educate responsible citizens, but also contribute to environmental sustainability in its operations and estates. Examples of best practice are the reduction of carbon emissions, recycling and waste management, energy efficiency, the promotion of alternative means of travel including own vehicles, as well as supporting conservation and bio-diversity. According to the University website, the institution has seen a reduction in CO2 emissions and reports on an increase in its environmental performance.

In light of a decline in government funding, increased competition in the HE sector and more complex societal and environmental problems, the University recognizes the need for an increased internationalisation in its projects, education, partnerships and recruitment.

Additionally, it is looking to increase its business engagement and collaboration with employers, in order to strengthen its position in the HE sector, generating additional funding and providing companies with graduates who possess the skills required. Faculty and staff are encouraged to increase their employer involvement, which goes as far as shaping curriculum design and delivery. In line with these collaborations, students are supported to participate in and acquire work experience, as well as pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Overall, the theme of responsibility and sustainability runs through all strategic documents that inform research, teaching, administration and operations by commonly referring to the institutions values and aims to work for the greater good. The business school in particular has assumed a position of responsibility in weaving the above themes throughout all its activities.

#### **4.3.3.2 Teaching and Research**

SD is integrated in all programmes of study at the business school, with students being exposed to related content through at least one compulsory module and optional modules. By the time students graduate, from either UG or PG taught courses, they will have encountered business and society concepts and issues in one form or another. As Chandler points out:

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“All the compulsory modules are sustainable based, sustainability based. And that is...that is long-term. There is no deviating from that. Therefore, it is not bolted on...” (Chandler)

Engaging students from the beginning of their studies with sustainable and ethical business, also gives lecturers the opportunity to develop and refine their modules and teaching. One of the interviewees points out that “the first year module is a bit of a chance to...to experiment” (Joey). He further explains that the team perceived the module “as a good vehicle to develop their [students] academic skills, as well as being interesting in its own right” (Joey).

Developing students’ academic skills including critical thinking connects with the overall strategy of learning and teaching to create responsible citizens, who are inquisitive, raise questions and foster debates. Lecturers foster these skills in different ways as exemplified below:

“I’m trying to help my students to better stimulate their creative thinking” (Monika)

“We ask people to identify their personal values, what they stand for. We ask them to reflect upon” (Rachel)

“We tried as far as possible to make it...a module which encourages debate” (Joey)

“I’m very much a realist in this regard. As much as responsible management positions are wonderful, I balance it with, very much business reality, and that’s the world we live in. It’s just that I will always be devil’s advocate and contemplate it [SD] from multiple positions” (Chandler)

“We’ve gotta try and get people to understand...well you’ve gotta get them to believe the science. But to get them to believe it, you’ve gotta get to understand it” (Ross)

Teaching is influenced by individuals’ backgrounds, experience and personal beliefs. While some lecturers have followed a traditional career in academia, many have practitioner-based experiences that guides their teaching approach as highlighted in the following comments:

“We’ve got quite a broad selection of people working for us” (Joey)

“I use a lot of that [professional] experience in my teaching. All of my teaching is experiential. I do try to balance the theory and the practice, basically” (Rachel)

In addition, some of the interviewees own values and beliefs overlap with those of the institution and its strategic outlook:

“I believe I’m very passionate about... creating and bringing values in my... well in my private/professional life but also in my class” (Monika)

“I mean it’s [SD] central to everything I do” (Ross)

“I felt I was going back to... my home really when I came here. So that was just wonderful for me because...as I said found myself again. I feel I’d lost my way really... going into the commercial world” (Rachel)

“It’s those values that drive me. They just happen to be related to responsible management. It’s a happy coincidence” (Chandler)

The business school has a dedicated research centre that examines the role of business in society, with academics expected to contribute, whether this is through publishing, business engagement or other forms of knowledge creation.

“We expect most or all of our staff to be research active and the way that we measure that is that we ask for one output per year. An output can be delivering a paper at a conference. That’s our expectation” (Joey)

All academics interviewed are research active, with some more than others. Considering that the institution is teaching rather than research focused, the output expected is low compared to other Universities. Both Chandler and Rachel state that:

“It’s a modern University. Modern Universities often set higher expectations and the reality is their expectations are exceedingly low” (Chandler)

“Teaching comes first, second and third really. And you know if you’re lucky you can integrate your...you can get your research done. But we’re all encouraged to do research. So they want us to do research. But teaching comes first” (Rachel)

Nevertheless, a growth in research is essential to the University’s strategy, evident in the expectations towards academics, but also the appointment of lecturers with a strong research track record such as Ross, and the aim to developing academics and PhD students. However, as some participants point out the pressure to engage in research is relatively low:

“They don’t worry about stuff like this. They just go Chandler here you go, you know what you’re doing. We leave you to it. You’ve got this many hours, do it” (Chandler)

“We’re not piling pressure on people to be research active. And that in a way is a reflection of our ethical values as well” (Joey)

This also includes the improvement of communication within the institution to raise awareness of research undertaken and celebration of successes. One of the promotional efforts includes

frequently organised presentations and talks by researchers and business leaders on business and sustainability issues, as well as relevant conferences and other networking events. Furthermore, the institution works with, and extends, its business network with local firms and organisations.

#### **4.3.3.3 Good practice**

No matter the genuine interest, the emphasis of the business school on SD ensures that all academics are exposed to the subject at a minimum level. To what degree academics then further engage with the agenda is dependent on individuals' interests. Nevertheless, the impact the exposure has on staff is observable in the following comments below:

“I finally approach at [the University] a refreshing outlook on education, a very much needed outlook on education. Where as much I was fighting the tide elsewhere to say that things need to be done differently, I wouldn’t put that under the heading of responsible management by the way. Just under the need for change umbrella”  
(Chandler)

“I felt that when I came here... I could go back to my roots... found myself again. I feel I’d lost my way really, going into the commercial world” (Rachel)

All interviewees engage with SD to varying degrees, with some academics cooperating across departments. Engagement is however, very much dependent on individuals' primary interests and their motivation and pro activity to cooperate with others. Table 4.11 provides an overview of all interviewees and their ESD involvement across different areas throughout the University.

Table 4.11 Participant Engagement with SD – Case B

	Research	Teaching	Campus Projects	Community Projects	Business Collaborations	LD Provision
<b>Chandler</b>	✓	✓	?	?	✗	✗
<b>Ross</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
<b>Monika</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>Rachel</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✗
<b>Joey</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✓
<b>Phoebe</b>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Engaged | ✗ = Not engaged | ? = Not known

#### 4.3.4 Challenges of ESD Integration

##### 4.3.4.1 Staff Engagement

ESD is embedded into the business school curriculum, with all participants having a stake in engaging with the subject, through teaching, research or operations. Additionally, engagement is highly encouraged across the school. Despite its promotion, the level of activity of academics still varies among individuals, in particular the perception of engagement of others within the school as seen below.

“So, in a way... we’re quite involved/engaged in responsibility and sustainability issues.

But I think we can do much more, because... our main strength... we are a small academic environment. So I think we can share more, we can engage more, also with local actors...”  
(Monika)

“They [senior management] can’t imagine staff not engaging, because I don’t think they’d be recruited if they didn’t engage” (Rachel)

[There is a] “core of advocates, not a lot of advocates. They’re core ones that make a lot of noise and action and within what they do, and they work with other people and bring them on board. So they support this ethos. But then you’ve got everybody else...filling in the blanks that are sort of not too fussed, or don’t offer much of an opinion. Plus the ones who might be naturally...sort of against CSR” (Chandler)

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More explicit examples of objections to engagement however, relate in particular to some support staff who reportedly show a “territorial” behaviour and “posting unhelpful comments”, but also “staff who will just question everything” (Phoebe).

“I would have expected staff to be a bit more interested. But the number of staff that actually...or kind of try put up barriers to why they can’t do things” (Phoebe)

Ways of showcasing good practice from business and academic experts, as well as raising awareness and engagement by facilitating networking, is offered through regular presentations throughout the year. Staff and students are encouraged to attend these events. Yet, the turnout of attendees is relatively low as mentioned by some participants.

“Unfortunately in terms of staff... and also even in terms of students there is ...unfortunately despite we promote a lot of this kind of academic events... and all the practitioner events... there isn’t always a big outlet” (Monika)

“These optional talks are good, but have proven not many people go to them or they’re the same group” (Chandler)

Collaborations with colleagues illustrate another challenge regarding ESD engagement. While some academics just get on with cooperating in their respective field, publish and attend conferences and events (such as Ross), others are more sceptical in approaching fellow academics within the business school and beyond (such as Chandler). There is also an absence of initiative to kick-start common cooperation and even a lack of knowledge how interests potentially link.

“To be honest, I’m not really inward focused. So I don’t really take much notice of these things [other departments]. We don’t really have much interaction with them. There’s nothing that actually promotes... cultivates cross-departmental... cross-faculty cooperations” (Rachel)

“Well, only in as much that we met [a Business School academic] in... well [at the] start of the academic year and agreed it would be good to do more stuff together. But we haven’t yeah specifically sat down” (Phoebe)

“Between staff you’ve got the problem that they’re academics and academics are very individualistic by nature. It’s got nothing to do with the topic area to be honest. It comes down to a classic academic thing, academic issues. Personalities that want or don’t want to work together. Classic splits between REF academics, and non-REF academics, new researchers versus established researchers” (Chandler)

Chandler further points out that factors such as “patience and time to work in relationships” are important by explaining:

“It’s an academic culture across the board and it prevents things happen. I don’t even know the full stories and I’ve already felt the sense of it here. I’m exactly the same. I was very optimistic when I first started and I know who I like working and I know... I already know, but I pretty much know who I don’t want to work in relationships” (Chandler)

Collaborations are also an issue between academic and support staff. Notable differences appear to lie in the attitude and perception towards staff groups, creating a divide. As Phoebe points out:

“There’s still this us and them attitude. ...more work needs to be done to kind of break down these barriers” (Phoebe)

#### 4.3.4.2 Student Engagement

Engaging students with SD is a somewhat unforeseeable task, with some interviewees struggling of how to best inspire participation and raise an interest in relevant themes and activities, while keeping the momentum up.

“Sometimes I feel that some students are quite pessimistic. They think they can’t do anything with the world. And I’m honestly...I’m struggling a lot. But I don’t know why some students are quite... engaged and keen to ask questions and other students...no” (Monika)

Nonetheless, an increased number of student projects and dissertations either focus on business and society themes or touch on the wider subject, which shows a positive change as noted by one of the participants who says that:

“Many students choose as their dissertation title CSR issues. So it has an impact on them. Whether that has any lasting impact beyond the University is untested” (Chandler)

Ross makes a distinction between UG and PG courses, electives and compulsory modules and experience of students. He points out the low involvement of undergraduates and taught masters are due to their lack of experience.

“What experience do they draw on other than what the parents have said. You know it’s very difficult to get... Masters students to open up. People don’t read in the same way

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that they used to do. They don't read newspapers daily and get up-to-date with what's going on. It's kind of depressing" (Ross)

He attributes a higher engagement and dialogue to more experienced students, which corroborates with Phoebe's statement on undergraduates and their lack of life experience.

"Full-time MBA students...it's depressing. They just want to make money. They see anything to do with SD as an impediment to the possibility of them making money quick. Executive MBA students on the other hand are a bit more savvy. They've been around a bit longer" (Ross)

"Well students are notoriously difficult... You want to influence them to do good things, but they've got a million and one other things going on in their lives, including their University studies... Some students naturally seem really keen, others completely just yeah not interested at all" (Phoebe)

The same issues are mentioned regarding the Student Union (SU) where involvement is a hit and miss exercise depending on staff members running the union, annual changes in roles led by students and a lack of resources in general. Nevertheless, the there is a caution about new SU leaders. So far working with the SU has been described as:

"Very good, generally, in that we had an excellent president this year – who unfortunately is leaving us. [But] we wait to see how the new president... hopefully he'll be supportive, but we'll wait and see" (Phoebe)

A lack of staff resources in the SU restricts cooperation in general and shows a negative effect on programmes and initiatives introduced to raise SD awareness.

"The actual core staff they're pretty stretched. So the general manager is very good, very supportive, but it's so busy... ...It's been quite difficult to get their buy in in stuff. ...because they couldn't really put time to... stuff this year, have missed out for the first year on the Green Impact Excellence" (Phoebe)

Other interviewees are more positive about students' engagement and their overall development throughout their studies, within the business school and the University as a whole. These changes are attributed to shifts in attitude of current, compared to past generations of students, more open students, as well as the size of the University.

They're dubious in their first year. They listen, engage. After three years it's been hammered home and they've had more time to potentially change... Students are

younger, they're less experienced. They're more open to the ideas. It's staff that are more dubious" (Chandler)

I suppose, here you see we know them and they know us, because we're small... they have to get engaged because it's about debating all the time. So it's all about debating and engaging. Whereas in [University XYZ] I found them very reticent" (Rachel)

Joey in particular affirmed changes in students by stressing:

"I think the 18-year olds that I'm seeing today have got a better idea of life-work balance than I had when I was 18. And in a sense that makes me optimistic because... if they're not obsessed with the idea of maximizing their own salary... If they've got that sense of balance in their personal life, maybe they're more inclined to have that sense of balance in their business decisions, or they're more inclined to set up their own business, which they then run to their own standards rather than just enter a job as a corporate wage slave" (Joey)

#### 4.3.4.3 Communication of Good Practice

Communication and dissemination of information relates to both, communicating with other staff members, as well as spreading the word about one's own work on ESD. Interviewees and their colleagues are raising awareness in different ways of their engagement. However, the level of activity to spread the word of best practice of responsibility and sustainability across the business school seems to lag behind. One interviewee confidently explains:

"I don't mind blowing my own trumpet in terms of what I do. But other people don't. I think they're voice probably could be bigger of what it is for fear of losing passion of what they're doing by being knocked down slightly by other people's, not negativity but... well it's neither positive or negative. They just...it's a blank canvas, which is very frustrating when you're passionate about something" (Chandler)

"I think that we can definitely link much more, even across departments, we can use much more our expertise, our background, our research experience" (Monika)

From an operational perspective, Phoebe reveals a lack knowledge and initiative of how her sustainability position could link with business school activities stating that

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“I wonder what they [the business school] would find useful... [The] campus is only over there but it’s almost like I don’t go up there enough. It’s a slightly separate... world and I think I should be there” (Phoebe)

A lack of communication also manifests within departments like estates when Phoebe reveals that she is not a part of some conversations and collaborations relevant to her role.

“They have a dialogue, but not that I have been... involved in. So there’s maybe things happening, but not that I’m aware of. Even though it’s funny isn’t it, even though we sit kind of across the hall from each other. Yeah there’s enough going on that sometimes you don’t always know there might be things going on you’ve not kind of got tuned in to”  
(Phoebe)

Moreover, there appears to be a lack of communication among individuals and their superiors, as seen in one interviewee who was not aware why he was only allocated a limited amount of teaching, given his expertise in the field.

“Not sure why I don’t do anymore [teaching], I’ve never been asked” (Ross)

Issues surrounding the communication and dissemination of information equally affects how courses are marketed to future students and the numbers of enrolment each academic year. In an attempt to promote a specialist SD postgraduate degree, the course cancelled after only one year, as it did not recruit. Joey exemplifies that the interest of potential students could have been low in applying for the course.

“Read into that what you will. Whether there’s the appetite for it out there, who knows? Certainly we couldn’t put enough students on the programme to justify keeping it open. Maybe, that was just too specialized a qualification. So we’d need better quality information about our markets to be able to answer that question” (Joey)

Besides appropriate information on identifying target markets, Joey further details existing issues that might be down to the marketing team’s efforts to promote the business school’s courses.

“There’s a whole world of issues with our marketing at the moment, and one of the things that we’re putting a lot of attention into is how we get better quality information about how we’re marketing to and what the markets for our programmes are” (Joey)

#### 4.3.4.4 Resources

A lack of resources including time, funding and staff allocation present difficulties in furthering sustainability engagement and collaborations. Teaching loads, and a therefore inherent lack of time, limit a higher engagement with SD, leaving participants to work around this issue on their own.

“You’re encouraged to do that [research], but the teaching is so overwhelming that it is very difficult” (Rachel)

“I find it quite hard to manage my research and my teaching workload in these two last years because I’m leading different modules in different fields” (Monika)

“You become very effective in yielding time for different...different deadlines. You just have to fit the system. They have to be done. They have to be done, which means you’ve got a little amount of time to do it. You do it in that little amount of time. It’s as simple as that. Not very responsible but that’s the dark side of the work” (Chandler)

However, a lack of time can also affect any collaborations with colleagues across the University.

“It’s quite difficult. There are barriers in the way of doing that. Basically they give us hours which are not enough. So we’re all overworked. If I want to get someone to come and do a session for me, it’s gonna require a lot of preparation. Then the delivery. And so therefore, all of these barriers... really inhibit any sort of cross faculty cooperation really” (Rachel)

From a more senior perspective, Joey emphasises the priority of teaching within the University ahead of research and other engagements and the prevalent attitude on the institutions need to meet its funding needs.

“No you can’t have more time for research because those things called students bring in 9k a year. So we expect you to spend 75% of your time teaching” (Joey)

Financial aspects further expand into research funding available for academics. The institution is smaller in nature, which also affects funds to undertake research projects, conferences and others.

“It’s easier in a smaller school, but we don’t have the funds to support... full engagement. But having worked in big schools and small schools... it’s horses for courses. [School XXX] had lots of money, so you could go wherever you wanted. But you were very much left to your own devices” (Ross)

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Resources devoted to SD activities on an operational level are dependent on a small team of staff who are in charge of any institutional activities. As Phoebe points out “It’s just really, it’s two” staff members, supported by other estates colleagues (Phoebe).

A closer look at staffing shows that two of the participants interviewed are on part-time and fixed-term employment contracts, which adds further pressure on their engagement, without a reduction of work. Monika who has a part-time position struggles allocating her time to fit her limited hours, and realistically works a full-time pen sum, while Phoebe is holding back with some engagement, not knowing if the employment contract will be extended or a permanent position will be available.

“Perhaps over the Summer I’ll have a chat...or...wait ‘til I know I’ve got a job after January [laughs]” (Phoebe)

Staff allocation presents another issue in some course teaching with a perception that some subjects are less difficult to be taught than other more technical subject areas, hence scoring lower in importance when prioritizing teaching allocation.

“One of the issues is for something like ethics, it’s often taught by someone that didn’t get out of the way quick enough, because there is a perception well anyone can teach it. Not saying that anyone could teach it well, but the point is, anyone could teach it and teach it not so badly that I had a riot from the students. ...or it’s someone that is brought in for a year to do it and then you don’t see them again” (Joey)

### 4.3.4.5 Academic Role and Academic Freedom

Changes in the academic role are prevalent in Case B, in particular relating to busy timetables of academics. As the university is teaching, rather than research driven, priority is given to teaching related activities and tasks as mentioned by several interviewees above (see section 4.3.4.4). In answering the interview questions, interviewees however did not refer to any issues related to academic freedom. The latter might be due to the important role that SD is playing in the business school and University, thus leaving room to pursue research in this area.

#### 4.3.5 Institutional Support

All participants were asked if they feel adequately supported to integrate SD within their role. Table 4.12 highlights that five out of six participants answered the question with yes, whereas one Ross did not provide an exact answer as stated below. Support is understood as having the time, resources and also encouragement to pursue SD activities and practices.

Table 4.12 Support of Academics – Case B

Do you feel adequately supported in integrating SD into the curriculum and furthering your SD knowledge/skills?	
Chandler	Yes
Ross	N/A
Monika	Yes
Rachel	Yes
Joey	Yes
Phoebe	Yes

Some participants go further into explaining their answer and perception of the support provided below:

“Yes I think so. I mean I’m confident saying that because I can see the resources that have been put into this area... we’re supported both at departmental level in terms of making hours available to people that want to research, and also at University level in terms of saying we need these resources to deliver this message” (Joey)

“I feel quite supported because all the time that I needed help and advice or just sharing ideas, honestly I – I’ve always found, found a open door” (Monika)

“Yes is the overall answer here... I’m sure... sure there’s loads more things they could be doing but they don’t have to. I’m happy to feed into the way it is” (Chandler)

“I do. Yes yeah absolutely” (Phoebe)

Not all interviews expect the provision of support though, as some will work to achieve their goals and research interest in their own way, regardless of assistance provided. Both interviewees below are positive about their roles and position within the school, but adopt a rather different attitude towards needing support, with both exerting a confidence in their capabilities that they

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can support themselves and are not dependent on help, as they will pro-actively undertake any means that further their research interest.

“Not need. Want possibly. But we’re stuck in restrictive resources. It’s a classic University thing, classic reality. But I quite like the challenge of what it is, set my own precedents and try to find money, contracts to find whatever it is to change the way it is to prove it can be done by example, not by throwing money at it” (Chandler)

“I support myself. No seriously, I’m past needing support I think, really. My job is to support others. I financed two trips abroad myself last year because I wanted to go to the conference and I couldn’t get funding...Yeah you know, some things you’ve just gotta do” (Ross)

### 4.3.5.1 Strategy and Leadership

Staff are supported by a number of strategies (see section 4.3.3), which highlight the importance of sustainability and long-term thinking. These ideas and the philosophy are manifested in actual policies that are further reflected in the Vice Chancellors own interest in the subject area, efforts to promote best practice and approachable manner. Phoebe has described the Vice Chancellor as:

“Very approachable. We’re lucky in that it’s, clearly sustainability and climate change is...is high on her agenda. So she takes it very seriously and almost anything we can do to sort of further the... to make the University a leader in that kind of thing, she is...she’s keen to support. It seems to be anyway” (Phoebe)

Senior management backing of the sustainable strategies is also evident in making funds available to hire specialist academic staff who promote and lead the Business School forward in becoming a leader in ESD.

“I would be pretty confident in saying that we’re supported both at departmental level in terms of making hours available to people that want to research and also at the University level in terms of saying we need these resources to deliver this message” (Joey)

### 4.3.5.2 Resources

Financial support or funding from the school and University in particular, is perceived but also dealt with differently by all individuals, as seen in the pro-active approach of Ross who invests his

own time and money into funding conferences. Nevertheless, all interviewees paint a positive picture of the financial means the institution offers considering its size.

“It’s not a bottom less pit, but yes the resources are there. Ethics is treated as every bit as fundamental a part of what we’re doing” (Joey)

“Yeah so haven’t yet had – no you can’t do that, it’s too expensive or it doesn’t seem like a good use of your time” (Phoebe)

However, with an increased competition to acquire funding, monetary support from the institution is bound to change in the future and become more competitive among staff. As Chandler points out:

“It’s OK. Like with other modern Universities it’s becoming a more competitive process. So you have to have a better outcome to get the money or that’s where they’re [the University] moving towards” (Chandler)

#### **4.3.5.3      Peer to Peer Support**

Due to the size of the University, departments and schools are smaller and colleagues seem to be more readily available and open to engage with peers.

“[The manager]’s very supportive with that kind of thing. [The University’s] small enough that yeah it seems to be a pretty good working relationship. I guess that’s the benefit of a slightly smaller institution” (Phoebe)

“Now when you find an open door you know... it’s a good indicator [of support]” (Monika)

“All of my colleagues are very much pro it. They’re very helpful and supportive. If I need material we’ll share material. We’ll liaise across modules saying what areas are you covering/what areas are you not covering. I feel if I wanted anything or needed anything I could go up to my manager or the Dean and say could I have this and they’ll say yes. I’ve never felt not supported” (Rachel)

There is also an increased awareness and responsibility of more experienced and senior staff to encourage and provide assistance to other staff members, and particularly young academics as both Joey and Ross mentioned.

“I suppose, now I’m in more of a position where I’m encouraging other people to research in the area. I’m putting them in a position where they can go to conferences by

supporting that conference attendance and encouraging to write papers in the area”  
(Joey)

“I suppose that’s my role here. It’s to support emerging scholars and junior members of staff here. So that if anyone has a paper that they’re considering putting to a journal or a book chapter then there’s an open invitation to send it to me first” (Ross)

However, engaging with and supporting colleagues, also depends on individuals confidence and pro activity to approach others. Additionally, this may also include the willingness to work with and support colleagues as Chandler pointed out above, but also an outgoing and positive attitude to approach staff members.

“Perhaps because looking at my own personal experience, I’m very pro-active in asking questions and asking perhaps to sharing my you know my doubts, my concerns or my you know my research with other people” (Monika)

#### **4.3.6 The Role of Learning and Development**

The underlying values of the institution and commitments of the business school to sustainability set the stage for SD engagement. The encouragement to undertake research on the subject and integration into courses and modules guarantees that academics engage with SD, at least on a basic level as a further involvement or interest is not always obvious. Learning and development takes place mostly through traditional more informal channels among participants. When asked how interviewees’ stay-up-to-date with SD knowledge and skills, researching, reading and writing, and networking were mostly mentioned (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 Development of SD Knowledge and Skills – Case B

How do you stay up-to-date and develop your SD knowledge and skills?					
Chandler	Ross	Monika	Rachel	Joey	Phoebe
Researching Learning Being Checking all responsibilities	Being connected Writing Reviewing articles	Learning by doing Independent study Expanding knowledge Expanding research Guest speakers	Conferences Up-to-date literature Writing Experts Networking	Reviewing journal submissions Writing Experienced colleagues	Networking Sharing best practice Training courses

In particular, networking or connecting with and learning from colleagues, not just within the school but also academics in the respective field of research is pointed out as a way of staying ahead within one's discipline. This can be through special interest groups, conferences, and other events. As pointed out below, there are advantages of establishing connections with other academics.

“You've got to be connected... to special interest groups in learning societies, to journals so that you're reviewing articles constantly in this subject area. So writing for journals so that you keep up-to-date with cutting edge if you like of the research in this area.

Theoretical as well as the kind of application in practice” (Ross)

“It's a way to update, to share ideas, to learn from the others and definitely basically share and learn ideas about what the others basically are presenting every year” (Monika)

One exception is Phoebe who is going on external and more formal training courses, as these are a requirement due to their legislative relevance to her role.

Learning and development is important to participants who all involve in activities to stay up-to-date, in one way or another. This is true in particular for SD related learning due to its complexity, breadth of areas it covers and continuously evolving nature, as exemplified by Monika and Ross.

“If you don't understand the real meaning... the great potential, the reason behind sustainability and responsibility in business... there's no sense to teach this module, these modules in inter-academic environment” (Monika)

“We’ve gotta try to get people to understand, well you’ve gotta get them to believe the science. But to get them to believe it you’ve gotta get to understand it” (Ross)

#### 4.3.6.1 ESD Learning and Development

Learning and development provided by the University is pre-dominantly focusing on a broad set of workshops and seminars to foster general skills and competencies. These are health and safety, career progression, the improvement of academic skills among others. There are no formal provisions for any ESD learning and development. This is also confirmed by participants who are not aware of any opportunities.

“In terms of formalising something for staff, there isn’t really anything at the moment that I know of” (Ross)

The only formal learning aspect widely relating to ESD can be found in the staff induction that highlights the University’s values and environmental activities and goals. However, this is a one-off event, taking place only once or twice a year for new starters with only a brief mention of sustainability related topics.

Deviating from traditional academic means and informal methods to learn and develop, to more formal ESD learning is viewed by some interviewees with scepticism. Formal training seems an abstract concept to some academics, as highlighted in the examples below:

“I think it’s very difficult. I need to try and get my head around what that would look like. And I can’t think of what that would look like” (Ross)

“I’m not sure what they could offer that we are not capable of going out and getting ourselves to be honest with you. I think if I wanted to have further knowledge and experience in a particular area, all I need to do is go and identify a course and they will send me on it. But I don’t sense that there’s any resistance” (Rachel)

A suspicion or distrust, whereas not negative in nature, is also present in academics who have been taught business and management in ways that focus on profit maximization of business rather than incorporating responsibility and sustainability. As explained below:

“I like that it’s [learning and development] optional, because I’d be so suspicious of the badging, the tokenistic approaches that were being applied. I still am sort of a little suspicious here, but that’s because I’m from a tainted educational background. I’ve taught to maximize profit. I’ve taught to maximize performance” (Chandler)

There are also positive perceptions on formalising ESD learning and development and how that could affect academics teaching and SD integration, by either widening its content in the staff inductions or teaching qualifications that academics need to complete as part of their position.

“It could be a very... important starting point. It’s perhaps a more systemic way to start your your teaching career” (Monika)

“I think there is a benefit to be gained from more structured learning in this area. I think that a lot of learning that people do is very ad-hoc and I think... it wouldn’t do anybody any harm you know if there was a structured professional development programme. Even if it was done at a very basic level so that part of our staff induction was about the sustainability and encouraging people to make conscious decisions... almost nudging people into making small decisions that are consistent with that kind of message” (Joey)

Furthermore, it is highlighted that integrating SD more into staff inductions or learning and development can have a lasting impact, as it raises awareness of academics own thinking and decision making, which might also affect their teaching and research.

“And I do think that if sustainability awareness was embedded more in... our staff induction, in our staff training – without ramming it down peoples’ throats and without telling people... you just get people to think about it. Cause for every person that we’ve got working here that will think about it and... that’s gonna have a positive impact” (Joey)

## 4.4 Case Study C

### 4.4.1 Institutional Background

Case Study C is part of a new University, established in the 1960s. The institution is the largest of the case studies and has a student population of > 10.000, of which about 25% account for overseas students (see Table 4.14). It offers a range of courses in social, human, natural and medical sciences, business, technology and arts at all levels from undergraduate to taught postgraduates and research degrees. The University strongly emphasizes its quality in research and teaching and international outlook.

According to the People and Planet League Table 2017, the University occupies a place in ‘third class’, the lowest of all categories, down two categories from its 2016 ranking. Over the past few

years, the University's ranking has fluctuated and has moved between categories, most notably in the past year.

Table 4.14 University Facts – Case C

Size	Areas of Study	People & Planet League Ranking	Domicile of Students
>10000	Arts Business/Management Health & Medical Sciences Natural Sciences Social Sciences & Humanities	Third Class Category (2017)	75% UK/EU 25% Overseas

#### 4.4.2 Participants' Backgrounds and ESD Interest

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with four academic staff from the business school and a member of staff from the estates department (see Table 4.15). All interviewees are involved in SD, with Robin, Ted, Lily, and Marshall showing a long-standing interest in Sustainability issues and a strong focus, also reflected in their research, teaching and other activities. Out of all interviewees, Barney is the least enthusiastic about the concept.

Table 4.15 Profile of Participants – Case C

	Pseudonym	Gender	Area
1	Robin	Female	Business School
2	Ted	Male	Business School
3	Lily	Female	Business School
4	Barney	Male	Business School
5	Marshall	Male	Estates

The participants have a range of academic and industry experience with positions held in private, public sector, for profit and non-for profit organisations (see Figure 4.3). Their expertise ranges from banking and finance, physical sciences, marketing and public relations, as well as environmental sciences and consulting. While all individuals have industry experience, Lily and Barney have spent a considerable amount of time in academia.



Figure 4.3 Background of Participants – Case C

The diverse careers and backgrounds show differences in how interviewees' interest in SD has developed, with almost all having a long-standing concern with contemporary issues (see Table 4.16). Whereas, the majority of interviewees show a personal interest in sustainability and reminisce in how they have become aware and interested in the subject, Barney approaches the issue in a more rational way by relating his interest to his position and importance to the business school, rather than from a personal perspective.

Table 4.16 Participants' Interest in SD/ESD – Case C

How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?	
Robin	<p>"I think it was probably when I hit 30. I had an early mid-life crisis 'cause I thought 'Oh my goodness, what am I doing? I could be doing this job for another 30 years'. And I was also becoming a bit disillusioned. So this is what, the early noughties I guess, in terms of how the bank had changed. So they were not longer the sort of pillar of the community. They were going down the sales... heavily sales route. There was some quite unethical behaviours going on. People were rewarded for not always doing the right thing, or for doing things but not always in the right way. And that kind of went against a lot of my values and principles."</p>

How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?	
<b>Ted</b>	"After four years of study in the lab I was like, maybe I made the wrong choice... I more like to solve practical problems instead of exploring theoretical or experimental issues... I was specifically interested in the footprint of...mankind has made to our earth... that's what I'm kind of interested in. Can I find another approach, an alternative approach to explore my interest with... regarding to our environment or regarding how to make those better".
<b>Lily</b>	"[It] came from when I was in the private sector in the the early 1990s, the late 1980s and 1990s, where I was starting to see both social issues like famine and environmental issues like waste or early stuff on climate change. I was really concerned that I thought business were some of the best and the brightest, and certainly the most powerful actors, but we were not really doing very much or we're doing it from a charitable perspective and I thought... that the problems were so big, I wanted to get involved in it from that perspective."
<b>Barney</b>	"I am interested in the sense that it is one of the dimensions of AMBAs accreditation... And clearly it's a...it's an area of some interest and acknowledgement that... it exists and also cognizant in that context of chairing quite a number of panels and finding that whole section, the ethics, CSR type area, community engagement is one of their weakest chapters. But from a point of view of running a Management School, yes I am interested in...how you fit it in, how you develop students/staff, can behave in manners that...a manner that delivers value not just to them, not just to the organization but also to the wider society."
<b>Marshall</b>	"I ended up taking an A-level many years ago in environmental studies or environmental science I think it was called... and that's probably one of the first things that have like started my interest in it. And I mean that was in like the mid to late 1980s... I managed to end up in a role in environmental consultancy because I took a Masters course in looking at environmental impact assessments. So that's, that really sort of... how I ended up working in environmental consultancy and then moving into environmental management. But I've always been interested in environmental issues previously but that's how I got into on a formal basis."

#### 4.4.3 ESD Integration

The institution offers a wealth of information on its activities and actions taken to emphasize SD integration, and how it tackles world issues ranging from strategies and policies enforced across the whole University. Environmental aspects and the promotion and use of renewable energy sources in particular are showcased as best practice. In addition, an outward looking and internationally focused view is presented to underline the position the University seeks to adopt within the HE sector.

#### 4.4.3.1 University Strategy and Operations

The University recognises its environmental responsibility, and the importance of adopting a holistic view on sustainability. This is presented through a number of strategies to integrate sustainability across the institution ranging from an overarching plan, and policies on environmental practices, green Information & Communication Technology (ICT), waste and recycling and carbon emissions.

The overarching strategy highlights the Universities' goal to become an essential player in the HE sector, nationally and internationally and to influence contemporary issues. In order to achieve this, the University plans to increase its collaborations with other institutions, business and the expansion of research and teaching. These efforts also recognise the institutions stakeholders such as staff, students and the local and wider community and the impact on these. Staff in particular, are frequently mentioned as essential to the Universities ambitions to initiate change, as well as supporting and including them in these endeavours. Case C clearly mentions that the institution intends to change and influence peoples' behaviour to drive change.

More specific plans and policies outlined focus on short-term and long-term plans to increase sustainability activities and significantly lower carbon impact. Annual environmental reports measure the performance and outcome of activities and initiatives, in addition to external indicators and league tables such as People and Planet. A dedicated team drives green initiatives, with the support of an oversight board responsible for its execution, both consisting of staff members from across the organisation.

Where SD is mentioned, it is brought to the foreground of documents and its importance is shown with the use of distinct terminology, that environmental and sustainable issues are at the heart of the institution and that the University takes its responsibility seriously. However, within the main strategy it SD appears to mostly support the Universities main goals rather than taking a priority role. Nonetheless, the emphasis on sustainable issues is affirmed by Barney who says:

"How can you, post financial crisis, in a world where we recognise global warming... how can you get asked to prepare for a management or business degree that doesn't have an acknowledgement of climate change, of the responsibility...professional responsibility in in let's say anywhere like banking" (Barney)

Overall, green issues are continuously mentioned, and focused on in strategic documents and across the University website. Specifically alternative and renewable energy and carbon are pointed out as main goals, in order to reduce energy usage and cut carbon emissions. Operationally, these goals are achieved through the use and own generation of renewable

energy, the promotion of alternative transport, waste management and recycling, and green buildings, which have been surveyed to identify energy reduction potentials and to achieve excellent or very good BREEAM ratings. Moreover, the University incentivises alternative transport and offers rewards through the provision of cheaper parking permits, bus tickets and additional bike sheds and repair services. The institution also promotes and uses fairly sourced food in its hospitality outlets, and is trying to achieve sustainable procurement where possible, including the use and purchase of green ICT equipment, furniture and others.

Annual reports published, supported by data collected, show reductions in energy consumption and an increase in renewable energy provision created by the University. Additionally, the reports show a decrease of and a rise in reusing waste, including office equipment and furniture.

#### **4.4.3.2 Teaching and Research**

Case C offers a variety of courses in different schools and departments that mirror the need for a skilled future workforce that is able to tackle sustainability issues. Many of these courses are taught in sociology and environmental sciences and engineering, with the latter described as "probably best" in teaching SD issues (Marshall). Generally, attention to ESD given varies across the University as pointed out below:

"It varies from faculty to faculty... Certain parts of our [Business School], are are very good but it's only certain parts of that" (Marshall)

The business school has no dedicated course on any SD related subject area, but rather traditional business degree routes. However, ESD is promoted throughout the school, not least with research undertaken and a specialist research centre. Specialist modules are available however, their teaching is dependent on the degree course studied on an UG and PG level and the provision of optional or core modules. In her department, Robin highlights the use of the terminology of:

"Responsible leadership, our take on sustainability if you will. And that is the sort of red thread that runs through all the modules" (Robin)

While not involved in teaching Lily points out that the business school is actively involved in teaching sustainability modules and that various subject areas include elements of SD in one way or another.

"They have... are required for their undergraduates in business and environment or whatever. I don't know what the name is called 'cause I'm not teaching it. They have

electives that they can take. A number of academic disciplines like supply chains or marketing or strategy, will have some aspect of it" (Lily)

Additionally, Lily uses her extensive network of contacts with corporations and experts to engage organisations with the business school and involve students "with real world learning" and "various aspects of bringing in [specialist organisations] into the classroom" (Lily).

Teaching challenges students' existing view points and encourages critical thinking. Methods used differ in their approach but focus a lot on experiential learning for instance through projects to work with the local community, boot camps, but also:

"A business simulation that we use online software for... [and] ...the students set up a company, a virtual company, and that particular version... as they start trading, different ethical dilemmas opposed to them through the software... We're trying to get people to think through a much broader engagement with stakeholders" (Robin)

However, not all participants are directly engaging with students, as three (Barney, Lily, and Ted) pre-dominantly focus on research and/or management activities and are hence not involved in teaching and curriculum activities. Additionally, Marshall's position is in estates and facilities, leaving Robin whose role is primarily concerned with teaching. As the Dean of the business school, Barney whose responsibilities are administrative and managerial spoke about his teaching activities explaining that:

"I've lost track when I was last in front of a class, God knows when. Probably that was... yeah so when did I last have a class? Well I mean, I do get...I do the odd guest lecture... but last time in front of a proper class responsible for a module... God that'd be more than a decade ago" (Barney)

The University prides itself of being a top player in both research and teaching, which are two of its strategic priorities. Research is to deliver and benefit the environment, business and society, but also to be driven by global concerns. Different departments at the business school have different requirements and expectations to research, with some placing more emphasis on research than others, but the majority being more active. Research activity is also dependent on individuals' positions and contracts as highlighted in the following comment.

"Our particular department is less research intensive. But we all have titles of Senior Teaching Fellows as opposed to Senior Lecturers. And that means we don't have the same requirement to produce research. There's only two departments out of the six where that is the case. The other six are all research focused. And that is the majority of their time

and they teach for a smaller proportion of the time. We're the opposite. So for me, I have about 10% of my time that I can use for research, whereas if I was in one of the research active departments that would be 60% of my time. There's a big difference depending on who you are and which department you're in" (Robin)

The SD commitment of the business school is evident in the launch of a dedicated research centre that focuses on the impact of business, with two of the interviewees heavily involved in its work. While Robin and Barney's research activity is lower, Lily and Ted predominantly focus on research as part of their roles and involvement with the research centre.

"I've launched the centre and I'm engaged in a lot of different research projects... basically what I try to do is use science based targets for business action and then look at where research can help enable the speed or the pick-up of those business actions" (Lily)

The centre's work is multi-disciplinary and stretches across departments and schools within the University that impact various business school activities.

"It's a cross-disciplinary centre, and that supports the modules and a body of research activity around sustainability in business. So we've got that. That's obviously, if you like, a flagship element. So there's a...there's a very strong engagement there" (Barney)

In addition, staff have a range of expertise across research subject areas, business and industries. Research projects focus on societal and environmental issues respectively, and how these can facilitate understanding of corporation and "how do we get it... into the board room" (Lily). Due to its recent creation, the centre is yet to produce research and establish collaborations.

"So we are establishing connections, but we haven't been you know we haven't got too much existing research collaboration" (Ted)

#### **4.4.3.3 Good Practice**

ESD integration takes place across the whole University with several specialist research centres. The institution acknowledges that sharing information and communicating with staff, students and other stakeholders is essential to achieving lasting change. In particular, behavioural change is to be achieved through strategy and policy means and change agents across the institution. Environment and engineering are leading the way within the institution on sustainability research and teaching. The business school is lagging behind compared to other disciplines with involvement of staff dispersed across departments (see section 4.4.3.2). Individuals interviewed

show SD engagement in a variety of areas from research, teaching, student engagement to business collaborations as highlighted below (see Table 4.17). Areas of involvement are represented with ticks and suggest that participants SD interest and activity is not consistent and depends not only on their interest, but also on the role they execute.

Table 4.17 Participant Engagement with SD – Case C

	Research	Teaching	Campus Projects	Community Engagement	Business Collaborations	LD Provision
<b>Robin</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
<b>Ted</b>	✓	✗	?	?	✓	✗
<b>Lily</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✓
<b>Barney</b>	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
<b>Marshall</b>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = engaged | ✗ = not engaged | ? = not known

#### 4.4.4 Challenges of ESD Integration

The main challenges of ESD integration reported by interviewees link to the dissemination and communication of information of activities and initiatives that take place on campus. Another challenge is engagement and the varying degrees of interest of academics in the subject area.

##### 4.4.4.1 Staff Engagement

Where involvement with sustainability takes place, staff have an existing interest in the wider subject area. A research group on business and society exists within the business school alongside the recently established research centre that focuses on wider business and environment issues.

“I think it’s an element that people almost accept. But... it’s a bit like a backdrop... it’s there. It’s not something that would have been, I would say, or what colleagues actually think hugely about. Those colleagues that do, are the ones that publish in the Journal of Business Ethics etc, for whom it is an integral part of their research activity. And they can be spread quite widely across the school across almost all departments” (Barney)

In order to raise awareness of SD the estates team, led by Marshall, supports champions from different schools who communicate activities and events to staff. Academics can then engage

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themselves, but also take projects forward to promote them amongst students. As Marshall explains:

“We have a... environmental champions... group that’s designed to... like – a bit a forum I suppose or a group – that... provide the information for staff on environmental projects and initiatives that we’re running” (Marshall)

The degree of involvement however, is dependent on each individual and each department, and their promotion of the subject. From a senior management perspective, the overall integration of ESD is described as positive albeit not a priority.

“I think generally positive, but it doesn’t really... I mean the issue is... It’s there’s...there’s an awareness, it might have some bearing depending on what I’m teaching, but it’s not gonna be at the forefront of what I’m teaching” (Barney)

With the establishment of a new dedicated research centre, ESD issues in the business school were hoped to be concentrated in one place that also took a lead on integration as outlined by Robin.

“So actually if you had a department that was perhaps CSR or sustainability, I think that would give if it more of a focus. It would also enable things like conferences to happen, ‘cause [the University] typically hosts one, at least one/two big, conferences a year. But they’re linked to departments and departments are responsible for them. So in a way I think that’s where it’s difficult to create opportunities” (Robin)

The purpose and effectiveness of the new centre to make a considerable shift in ESD integration is questioned by Lily who states “by and large there’s very very little... osmosis, some improvements”. She continues questioning the Dean’s half-hearted approach and campaigns for a more fundamental change in integrating ESD across business schools by tackling core programmes such as MBAs.

“But nevertheless, we are not looking at changing the core being of the MBA programme. So I actually hold little hope that... just having a centre would do those sorts of things” (Lily)

Contrary to Lily’s comment, Barney suggests that the research centre could have a higher impact and hints that there are problems that need to be worked out first internally.

“I think it could have a lot [of impact], but I’m not gonna give you any reasons why. I think that... there are some internal issues that I need to address and certainly having not an inconsiderable impact on the research agenda” (Barney)

Academic involvement in the business school can be influenced by one’s own interest and understanding, but also the engagement with and promotion of ESD by senior academics such as Heads of Departments and the Head of the Business School. The frequent rotation in department management can be viewed from different perspectives and lead to a shift in research and teaching priorities.

“I think depending on who is Head of Department at any given moment, depends on what the focus of that department is. And so the focus of the department changes slightly depending on that particular person’s enthusiasm. And it’s... often linked to their research, their passions” (Robin)

While these changes can have a positive impact and spur innovation from different fields of expertise and views, it also risks complicating the integration of SD. In particular, if Heads of Departments have undertaken major changes to their predecessors.

“In a way I think it’s quite good because every three years you get a new impetus, a new perspective. So it’s good from that point of view, but it’s not so good in terms of how some of these big issues like sustainability can be embedded across the school that is complicated” (Robin)

With a new appointment to head the Business School the involvement of the Dean in ESD integration appears to have changed too. Although aware of and concerned with sustainability and accreditation standards, Barney’s ESD engagement within the business school is rather low, leaving the implementation to course leaders, directors and Heads of Departments rather than taking on a more active role as explained below.

“So my involvement is minimal. It would much more be the fact that the Associate Deans for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes would understand what the... market wants but also... triangulating that with the requirements for accreditation” (Barney)

The Dean’s view and decision to pass on responsibility regarding ESD integration is not supported by all interviewees who paint a bleak picture of the state of business schools in general, as seen in Lily’s example below:

“I would say that all of these schools are teaching business as usual plus. So that’s what I call it,... which means that they are teaching what they have always been teaching at Business Schools...plus. And now the plus maybe a required plus, plus something on ethics and sustainability, and slowly there’s a trickle down effect that many of the courses have that. But unquestionably there are no front runners that are integrating sustainability in a core way, that are a big player in the field of business and management schools in terms of... education” (Lily)

#### **4.4.4.2 Student Engagement**

Students at the business school and the University are engaged by the Student Union and the estates department to partake in sustainability activities and events across campus through a dedicated green group. Nevertheless, their involvement and interest varies and needs a higher focus as mentioned by one participant below:

“There’s always a small proportion who are highly engaged and motivated on environmental issues... it splits sort of like 25% are pretty keen and pretty interested... then there’s... 50% in the middle, who might be interested but are... passive in relation to environmental issues... then 25% who have no interest in it [SD] whatsoever” (Marshall)

The green group is funded through the estate department budget but involves a collaboration between the Student Union that employees students and other staff members. Moreover, the group is supported and advised by both the SU and Marshall’s team.

“I...help develop the projects they’re getting into... sort of like run and the objective for [the initiative]. It’s a... unique set-up really. But it does seem to work pretty well”  
(Marshall)

#### **4.4.4.3 Communication of Good Practice**

Throughout the interviews, participants showed a lack of knowledge or information on aspects of ESD integration within the business school and University, such as being aware of the key people who are concerned with SD in the organisation, or even across departments within the business school. One participant stated:

“I don’t know actually is the answer. Now I would have known if I was at [the previous University], ‘cause we had a chap who was responsible for embedding green initiatives.

And I am guessing, there probably is the equivalent here at [the University]. But because it's so big and because I still have only been here over a year, I don't actually know who that is. But I'm guessing that there is somebody that... does all that of that sort of stuff" (Robin)

A lack of knowledge was also observed in not being aware of processes and previous developments in the business School that have led to current trends and strategic priorities, but also current processes on research and teaching outside of individuals' respective roles. This could be due to the participants' recent appointments or specific roles that require a broader involvement in various areas of the institution. While the latter might offer a less detailed view on Case C in some respects, it provides a broader view on ESD integration across business schools.

"In terms of the process [of establishing the research centre] I don't know. It pre-dates my time here. I think it came from a conversation with a senior Professor..." (Barney)

"I wear a couple of different hats. I came from the private sector originally and worked in marketing and advertising and I came back into academia to very much take a look at business as a force for positive change. So a lot of what I'll talk about will be based on that context" (Lily)

There are a variety of events that invite staff to engage with sustainability and get informed about the latest research of colleagues within the University, such as through lunch time presentations that attract around 20-30 attendees per session. Nevertheless, there appears to be a lack of reach to attract more staff. How these events are communicated and advertised is not conclusive, but a lack of information is evident.

"Sometimes you... don't really hear about things. Perhaps it's more by luck than anything else. However, things like the [...] initiative, when that deal was done, that came out on a announcement from the Dean, to tell us about it to explain what the centre would do and the professorial appointment and things like that" (Robin)

Where individuals are involved in ESD it was observed that there is a disparity between strategic and operational knowledge of academics on actual business school commitments to SD.

"The strategic documents for the Management School will have sustainability or CSR or responsibility in there... because I don't engage with them sufficiently you know on a regular basis I wouldn't necessarily think 'Oh yes 3.2 in such and such a document is all around how we're gonna embed sustainability across all our programmes'. I wouldn't know that level of details. But it will be there" (Robin)

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In the course of undertaking the research interviews, changes in the leadership of the business school have taken place. The previous Dean who led the school for over a decade was described as having “been quite a constant” (Robin). The new Dean is aware of the importance of ESD for business education and considers the current level of integration adequate, hence the priority to focus strategically on other issues.

“I think there’s other things that have strategic priority that I would push more. And partly because... you may push things were there’s a need to push. I take a view that what we do actually is already... to a certain degree and probably an acceptable degree addressing the methodic area then I’m quite happy that the Associate Deans, hence Programme Directors in turn will manage through the... system. I don’t need to push...I don’t need to push it like I’m might need to push certain other things” (Barney)

Even though the Dean identifies ESD as an essential part of business education, he does not advocate its use as a strategic advantage in promoting and advertising the business school. It is rather seen as something that should be a part of business already.

“Shouldn’t ethics, social responsibility percolate everything? It should be fundamentally unremarkable. I’d be more worried that the people are seeing it as remarkable because then it’s hey it’s new... the moment anyone says that they want to use it as a differentiate factor then alarm bells would be ringing in my head” (Barney)

He further adds that:

“There’s no way we pitch this and say ‘this is a comparative advantage for us’, because frankly it’s just a... it’s a bit like saying international business. Well actually is not all business international?” (Barney)

### 4.4.4.4 Resources

Most participants interviewed did not emphasise resources, but rather generic issues they were concerned about in relation to SD within their school and institution. Where mentioned in interviews resource issues are a lack of time, funding, and additional staff to implement University strategy and policies. Funding is a specific issue for Marshall and the estates team in supporting green projects as the amount of money allocated is uncertain each year.

“I only find out what I’m getting... half way through the year so it’s a bit difficult to tell sometimes” (Marshall)

A lack of funding is also closely linked to additional staff resources that are needed to put sustainability projects into practice. Specifically ESD is noted to require an individual who possesses the expertise and academic background to successfully integrate it across the University. Marshall emphasises:

“For my role it’s mainly staff, but for the other things like Education for Sustainable Development I think really... it’s not really my role to lead on that... it really needs probably... someone who comes from a academic background to lead on that and I’d... work with them and... help where possible. I think you would need the lead from somewhere else” (Marshall)

#### **4.4.4.5 Academic Role and Academic Freedom**

Two participants, who referred to the academic role and academic freedom, had strong and somewhat contrasting opinions on ESD and its implementation within the business school. The Dean is more sceptical about increasing the promotion and positioning of ESD within the schools strategy, as well as staff engagement and learning and development opportunities. In contrast, other colleagues are very passionate about ESD and the implementation across the business school and the institution as a whole, incorporating academics’ efforts and emphasising individuals’ responsibilities to contribute to making a change. Lily, in particular, highlights an outdated thinking on the perception of academics expectation to academic freedom and explains:

“People will choose whether they’re gonna write about it. Academic freedom isn’t about ‘I get 3k travel money’. That’s an organisational gift, which comes with strings attached. You have to do something. I think the question of how they’re gonna do the research is a different thing. I can’t force people that they’re gonna do that. Then I build incentive structures” (Lily)

#### **4.4.5 Institutional Support**

When asked if the interviewees feel adequately supported in integrating SD in the curriculum and broadening their skills, three participants answered ‘YES’, and two did not provide an answer (see Table 4.18). Given that Barney is the Dean of the Business School, he is more in a position to support and exert influence, rather than needing support. Whereas, Marshall indicated that he

needed support with respect to staff resources, but did not convey that he was neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with the support given.

Table 4.18 Support of Academics – Case C

<b>Do you feel adequately supported in integrating SD into the curriculum and furthering your SD knowledge/skills?</b>	
<b>Robin</b>	Y
<b>Ted</b>	Y
<b>Lily</b>	Y
<b>Barney</b>	N/A
<b>Marshall</b>	N/A

The level of support is perceived differently among the interviewees. One of the participants, who is also an emerging scholar and less experienced academic, describes his experience as positive and notes that he should concur that he is being adequately supported.

“I think I should say yes, cause first of all the [position] provides me [with a] free load of teaching, so I can explore my research capacity” (Ted)

Ted’s view is shared by others who state that:

“I would say probably yes. I think probably because ... it’s quite informal. Perhaps my reservation is that it could perhaps be more formal. And I guess... it always is down to you as a member of staff to be proactive about whatever it is your passionate about. So I guess in a way it’s quite a distributive model of how they want us to operate” (Robin)

Adequate support does not constitute for sufficient support. The perception of each interview and their satisfaction is also influenced by previous support experienced in other HEIs. It is then not surprising that one interviewee replies that:

“I think that the [the University] is giving me a lot more support than [the previous University] gave. That being said, I don’t think it’s sufficient” (Lily)

#### 4.4.5.1 Strategy and Leadership

The Universities endeavour to integrate SD is enshrined in multiple strategies and policies throughout the institution. In the business school in particular, the newly established research

centre supports the integration of ESD by facilitating and promoting interdisciplinary work and research with centres and other schools across the University. Nonetheless, there is some doubt that a centre alone cannot contribute to further ESD integration, which requires important courses such as MBA programmes to incorporate sustainability at its heart (see section 4.4.4.1).

With Barney holding a position of responsibility, he is able to provide support to academics and support staff rather than being supported. However, a low involvement from his side due to other more pressing priorities (see sections 4.4.4.1), leaves any issues and activities to be dealt with up to Associate Deans within the Business School.

“I think the thing is in a large management school like [us]... we’ve got just over 250 academic staff so all of it will be the Associate Deans who will drive that forward. They all know... what the accreditation requirements are. They will ensure that programmes have the necessary elements in it” (Barney)

Nevertheless, ESD is seen as an important part of the curriculum, with the Dean acknowledging its importance of leading a business school (see section 4.4.3.1). Some however, believe that more could be done by senior figures like the Dean, in order to raise the profile of ESD in the business school and ultimately bring it to the core of the agenda.

“I think the Dean should be changing the whole purpose for being, to make it more sustainable at its core. But that means that it’s still a pretty good... stopping off place. Especially given that... I’ve got a corporate funder that’s given a lot of money to actually scale up change. So, that’s... useful, yeah” (Lily)

#### 4.4.5.2 Resources

Resources, whether time or funding or any other means to broaden your knowledge, are readily available. Grants and other funding are available to support one’s research or the attendance of conferences and although no further details are known about internal funding, two interviewees explain:

“They [the University] have small small grants for early starters like me to to cover travel or conference fees so that you can use the seat funding to get a better picture of your research and get more networking and then apply it for better funding” (Ted)

“We are given a small research and development pot of money. Every member of staff is given an allocation every year and that’s to pay for things like conferences, or kind of one

day events that you might want to go to. The other money is if you want to do a specific training scheme" (Robin)

Various initiatives and regularly occurring events on campus are also available to share knowledge and network with other scholars. However, it is up to academics to take advantage of the resources available and as Robin explains "it's down to you to make things happen" (Robin).

#### **4.4.5.3      Peer to Peer Support**

Not much was mentioned on how colleagues support each other. This could be due to the larger size of the business school, and concentration of interviewees within their specific departments and/or research centres.

#### **4.4.6      The Role of Learning and Development**

The University offers a range of learning and development opportunities to all groups of staff. Provision for academic staff members include teaching and learning related courses to gain, for instance, a HE teaching qualification or research related coaching focusing on funding, writing, and other job related chores. Additionally, a range of events offers information on publishing, research ethics, and other general topics relevant to the academic role.

Dedicated resources for learning and development provisions are available to academics who wish to attend developmental opportunities, whether it is additional qualifications or any other professional development. As Robin points out:

"There's a fund that you can apply to as a member of staff if you want to undertake any sort of development. And it's one of those where you... make a business case for whatever you want to do. So if there was a either a specific qualification or an initiative that you felt strongly about, you could apply for that" (Robin)

Furthermore, the University offers secondments to its academic staff who wish to pursue research and teaching in a different institution for a specific amount of time. It would also aid academics if:

"you wanted to go and work in a... perhaps a institution that has sustainability as the particular focus, then that would be one way to do it" (Robin)

Learning and development of interviewees largely takes place through traditional means including research, conferences, collaborations and publishing (see Table 4.19), often connected to the membership in associations and organizations related to one's own specialism. These include the British Academy of Management (BAM), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), UN Global Compact, the International Leadership Association (ILA), and the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) among others. Two participants mentioned:

"I work with a lot of scientists around the world. I go to more natural science conferences than I would to management science conference for example" (Lily)

"It's the literature that tells you what are others doing or what's the most state-of-the-art ideas about sustainability studies. And second of all, I would say to maintain active connections with the business" (Ted)

Technological advances have facilitated and opened up new means of communicating, networking and forming collaborations through platforms such as LinkedIn or the use of webinars to share knowledge and best practice.

"A lot of my ex students I'm linkedIn with. So some of them share stuff of what they blog or I share stuff. So that's another way to keep in touch" (Robin)

Table 4.19 Development of SD Knowledge and Skills – Case C

<b>How do you stay up-to-date and develop your SD knowledge and skills?</b>				
<b>Robin</b>	<b>Ted</b>	<b>Lily</b>	<b>Barney</b>	<b>Marshall</b>
Academic newsletters <b>Books</b> <b>Conferences</b> <b>Special interest groups</b> <b>Membership in dedicated organisations/associations in the field</b> <b>Webinars/LinkedIn</b>	Reading <b>Presentations</b> <b>Maintain active connections with business</b>	Read journals <b>Cross-disciplinary work</b> <b>Co-authorship</b> <b>Conferences</b>	*	Reading <b>Journal subscriptions</b> <b>Environmental legislation</b>

Learning at the business school can mostly be categorised as informal as opposed to formal learning opportunities that aid and foster more general capacity and skills building.

“I would say it’s more informal networks. And what you tend to find is, there are a cluster of people that you either bump into or you hear about... either of doing research or are interested in that area or do guest lecture slots. So I would say I’ve found out about those people informally” (Robin)

Informal learning plays an important role in the professional development of academics. As ESD integration is a no-size-fits-all task, it can help to communicate and share good practice among scholars in the subject area. Sharing best practice can open up new avenues of teaching, researching and integrating ESD as whole. Moreover, sharing and communicating with others, specifically across disciplines can enhance research and teaching on SD and facilitate understanding of business and management issues, as well as more scientific perspectives as stated by two interviewees below:

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<sup>51</sup> Due to time constraints of the interviewee, details on this question could not be obtained. However, the participant is affiliated with, and a member of, various high profile HE networks and organisations that require a good understanding of key themes and issues in the HE and particular business school landscape.

“I have a cross appointment. I’ve got people in my team, strictly from, a modelling background or observational ecology background and then I’ve got management scholars” (Lily)

“I expect to get ideas that I can pinch and use over here. So I think that’s probably, for me anyway, the best way for me to learn about new ways of thinking, new ideas, something that’s a bit more creative” (Robin)

However, not all participants view networking as a priority but focus more on establishing and fostering actual collaborations with business experts and scholars in the field that enables lasting partnerships.

“No, it’s not networking. I mean I co-author with them. I read multiple journals, I have a cross appointment with an Environment Centre. I’m working with them on an ongoing basis” (Lily)

#### **4.4.6.1 ESD Learning and Development**

There are no formal learning and development opportunities within the business school or University that focus on ESD integration. One interviewee explains that:

“Yeah there isn’t really any at the moment... we do need... training on how academic staff could integrate it [ESD] into their curriculum and...why is it relevant and... a common... framework for doing that. And somebody to... provide the missing training for it” (Marshall)

In asking what could be done to increase engagement of academics with SD, including formal training, interviewees replies but also a more detailed knowledge on learning and development varied across the board with one noting:

“The logical place for that would be in the annual appraisal that we all have. An area within that document covers training and development needs. And so if you formally try to do something, that would be the place to put it and you’d have a discussion with your Head of Department around that” (Robin)

Offering more formal development opportunities however, requires the provision of careful planning and execution across all departments and the many subject disciplines within the business school. More importantly, this entails striking relevance to disciplines but also its execution, i.e. the teaching or delivery by ESD experts.

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“I think that would be a great idea. But it has to be delicately designed... so those trainings should be tailor made, should be carefully designed and should be delivered by at least people like me or better than me” (Ted)

Lily seconds that and suggests the urgency to firstly, educate the educator:

“Well first of all I think you gotta train the trainers. So I think you've gotta really build capacity, your trans-disciplinary capacity amongst Business Schools and their counterparts in the natural sciences especially. I think there's a lot to be said about trying to train natural scientists to try to talk to the boardroom and to talk to business scholars. So the whole focus on how to build trans-disciplinary teams is key” (Lily)

The responsibility might also fall upon an individual or group that steers ESD integration and training aspects otherwise, it runs the risk of not being promoted properly. Robin and Marshall suggest:

“We need the right governance structures in place and then somebody or some organization some department being given responsibility to set up a system... that would roll out ESD” (Marshall)

“I think because it's not a single department's responsibility it becomes nobody's responsibility” (Robin)

Formal ESD learning and development is however not supported by all interviewees. Barney in particular, is not enthusiastic about formalising ESD learning and development, but suggests rewards and incentives that should be used.

“Training in itself would be very little of value, because it's a bit like the horse to water and making it drink. You know if I was cynical I'd say you need... appropriate metrics and incentives. If there's something in it for them, they'll do it. Not very ethical but never mind” (Barney)

While Lily does not agree with Barney that learning and development does not have value, she concurs on the importance of incentives to motivate academics. She further suggests to collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines to widen the

“So I think it's really key to build... teams and to reward staff for... that kind of engagement. I would set up incentives that would enhance that. Secondly though, I would do a series of capacity building required workshops on basic sustainability 1-on-1, and I would bring in especially at the University my natural sciences colleagues to talk about

the basics of climate science, the basics of eco system services. We said, here's the science, now where are the business solutions? So I would bring in a mix between the scientists from other faculties that are experts on sustainability. I'd bring in leading companies that are working on this. And then I would have a workshop on what are the implications of this for business school research and teaching education" (Lily)

In discussing the urgency of ESD learning and development Lily expressed the importance of making formal training compulsory in order to achieve rapid and far reaching change.

[I]"would put it as required. You're gonna lose some people and those probably are the people that are quite useful to lose. And if you have a good incentive structure it works" (Lily)

Rather than having a compulsory development structure, others suggest voluntary options that give academics a choice to decide if they want to engage with ESD by providing ongoing assistance and support. Marshall and Robin comment:

"We would say it's a voluntary approach that it maybe... it might make your course more interesting... it might improve retention on your course. And we should offer a certain practical guide to how they could go about doing it so that it... rather than causing problems with them" (Marshall)

"In terms of people that aren't engaged with the agenda, I think probably that's where perhaps more of a formal approach would work. So perhaps having different case studies or alumni profiles, different guest speakers" (Robin)

Compulsory versus voluntary measures to undertaking ESD training presents with contested debates on the academic freedom of HE staff. All participants except Lily support a voluntary learning and development structure. Lily however speaks quite strongly about the issue of compulsory training by pointing out that:

"Academic freedom isn't about 'I get 3000 travel money, 3000 of travel money every year'. That's an organizational gift, which comes with strings attached. I think the incremental carrot is insufficient. And I would say 'Okay you want your... research money to go to a conference, well it's not for free'. The core part of our strategy is to actually deal with some of the world's biggest problems from a business perspective. And in order to go to those conferences this is... how I would do it" (Lily)

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Rather than the provision of training, the Dean suggests to raise awareness otherwise, by means of using Programme Directors who then integrate ESD directly into the core of degree programmes.

“I think I’d rather turn around awareness raising. Awareness raising probably among Programme Directors who’ve got responsibility for the overall shape of the programme and encourage them to think about how it might be put... something like ethics, sustainability at the core of your programmes” (Barney)

While there is a development programme for new lecturers to achieve a teaching qualification, it is not clear if this covers any content relating to ESD. As the Dean exclaims:

“I don’t know enough about the content. I’m too far removed from that if there’s anything on ethics, sustainable business in that one. But certainly we have regular workshops on teaching progress/pedagogy, and will on many occasions cover particular topics as well, and certainly ethics and sustainable business, given that we’ve got a Professor of Sustainable Business, she runs... she’d be running a workshop like that for colleagues” (Barney)

## 4.5 Summary

This chapter has analysed each case study individually and presented the findings of how ESD integration in each business school. It has analysed perceptions of academics on support provided by their schools and the provision of learning and development opportunities. The broader institutional setting of each case was taken into consideration, including organisational strategy and operational activities, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of each case study.

## Chapter 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Overview

Chapter 5 follows on by cross analysing all three cases to reveal common themes and differences that have emerged throughout the analysis process. By comparing the case studies and identifying commonalities and differences in ESD integration, Chapter 6 then seeks to answer the research questions initially developed.

### 5.2 Institutional Contexts

#### 5.2.1 Overview of Cases

All case studies are inherently different from each other, with variations in student numbers, areas of study, income and rankings in University league tables. In addition, each University has its own distinct history, organisation of faculties, schools, departments and leadership, all of which influence the business schools attached to them. While it is difficult to compare the cases due to each unique set-up of the broader institutional context, some basic measures are used to form an initial comparison. Case A and B can be placed in the same category in terms of student numbers of below 10000, with students studying at Case C exceeding those of the other two institutions. Additionally, the number of courses and subject areas offered at Case C exceed those of Case A and B, including environmental studies and engineering. The sizes of the institutions are also apparent in the income generated, with Case A and B's income well below that of Case C (see Table 5.1). Despite the differences, some indicators such as funding can help facilitate understanding of ESD integration or any other changes within the institutions.

Table 5.1 Case Studies – Facts and Figures

	Size	Areas of Study	People & Planet	Domicile of Students	Income
			League Ranking		
CASE A	<10000	Arts Business/Management Humanities Social Sciences	2.2 Class (2017) 2.2 Class (2016) 1 <sup>st</sup> Class (2015)	97% UK/EU 3% Overseas	<£75m
CASE B	<10000	Arts Business/Management Humanities Law Social Sciences	2.1 Class (2017) 2.2 Class (2016) 2.2. Class (2015)	94% UK/EU 6% Overseas	<£100m
CASE C	>10000	Arts Business/Management Health & Medical Sciences Natural Sciences Social Sciences/Humanities	2.2 Class (2017) 2.1 Class (2016) 2.2. Class (2015)	75% UK/EU 25% Overseas	>£100m

Differences also appear in the ranking of each business school across a number of organisations that compile league tables such as the Complete University Guide, The Times Higher Education or The Guardian University league table. Case C scores the highest in all rankings and is well ahead of Case B that can be found in the middle and Case A that is consistently ranked lower.

Rankings in the 'People and Planet League' table can be seen to have changed over the years with both Case A and C having dropped, while Case B has improved its position. It is not clear what has led to the changes, but Case A and C indicate that the institutions' commitment to sustainability initiatives and activities has decreased in the past years. A closer look at the 2017 league table, comprising a number of key areas, shows differences in linking education and sustainability. The 2017 data show a near 100% score in the education domain, suggesting a high integration of relevant sustainability subjects into modules and courses at Case B, with A (30%) and C (0%) scoring considerably lower.<sup>52</sup> Overall, the latest scores mirror the interviewees' depiction of SD integration into modules and courses at each business school.

<sup>52</sup> At the time of writing, a detailed data set from previous league tables was not available anymore to compare ESD integration and each institutions development in this area.

### 5.2.2 Participants' Roles and Backgrounds

Interviewees are predominantly from the business schools, with some based in the estates or facilities departments within each University and one based in another faculty. Table 5.2 outlines details of the departments participants work in.

Table 5.2 Participants Area of Work

	Business School	Estates	Other	Total
CASE A	3	1	1	5
CASE B	5	1	N/A	6
CASE C	4	1	N/A	5

All interviewees come from a variety of backgrounds. The majority has previously worked in the private sector before they embarked on an academic career, however still have strong ties to business and other organisations. Table 5.3 provides an overview of the various backgrounds and areas. It shows that experience in certain fields is prominent among interviewees from all three cases, such as accounting, banking and finance.

While the expertise and background of individuals is predominantly business and management related, the table also highlights participants with a degree and experience in other subject areas such as geography, physical and environmental sciences or agricultural sciences. The many variances in backgrounds and expertise in all business schools makes up a broad spectrum of subject areas, something that is rather unique in HEIs.

Table 5.3 Participants' Backgrounds

Case A	Case B	Case C
Accounting	Accounting	Banking/Finance
Agricultural Sciences	Agricultural Sciences	Business Development
Coaching	Banking/Finance	Consulting
Conservation	Environmental Sciences	Lecturing/Teaching
Engineering	Law Enforcement	Marketing/PR
Finance	Lecturing	Non-for Profit/Charity
Geography	Logistics	Physics
IT	Manufacturing	
Lecturing/Teaching	Music	
Manufacturing	Retail	
Travel & Tourism		

Furthermore, interviewees' roles across their business schools and departments differed, with Case C showing a broader range of positions of academics spoken to (see Table 5.4). Academics' roles also offer a glimpse into responsibilities, attitudes and hierarchy structures. Interviewees from Case A and B mostly occupied lecturer positions and one other job role referring to the estates and facilities staff member. Case C includes interviews with two individuals at professorial level, including the Dean of the business school.

Table 5.4 Participants' Roles

	Fellow	Lecturer	Professor	Other
CASE A	N/A	3	1	1
CASE B	N/A	4	1	1
CASE C	1	2	2	1

### 5.2.3 Individuals' Development of Interest in Sustainability

Participants' interest in SD and related areas has evolved differently over time, and was triggered by a number of factors or experiences. Some interviewees describe a longstanding curiosity in sustainability and environmental issues (see Raj Case A, Table 4.4 and Marshall Case C, Table 4.16), while others relate it to a personal attitude and behaviour (see Ross Case B, Table 4.10). Others recall growing up and gaining an environmental awareness and critical thinking throughout education, which instilled a desire to positively contribute within their area of expertise, by applying a more solution focused thinking and practical application to solve contemporary issues (see Ted Case C, Table 4.16 and Phoebe Case B, Table 4.10). Although participants have different backgrounds and professional expertise, they appear to share similar values that have influenced their professional history and identity, irrespective of their institution of work.

In turn, there are participants who developed an interest in sustainability issues while working outside of academia and who struggled with the direction organisations were taking and changes in business that led to scandals and unethical behaviour (see Lily & Robin, Case C). Additionally, it brings out principles and beliefs that some individuals have grown up with and that "tapped into some long-standing values" (see Rachel, Case B), or have developed over time by disagreeing with organisations behaviour and contradiction with personal values (see Robin, Case C). Values and personal beliefs are then also incorporated into these individuals' research and teaching. This suggests that HE has provided them with a platform to engage further with issues encountered

during their non-academic career as seen in Rachel's case. Fuelled by her experience, Rachel continuous pursuing research within the area she has previously worked in and where she came across issues.

Two interviewees have found themselves working on sustainability issues by chance and either did not initially intend to engage with SD, but rather acquired experience and an awareness throughout their career (see Penny, Case A), or did not have an interest up until they worked in academia and have developed a professional interest over time as reported below.

"[I] had absolutely no interest in ethics whatsoever, but I saw it as a positive answer to give in an interview to get a job" (Joey, Case B)

As with Joey, all interviewees from Case A, B, and C, have developed an interest, albeit to different degrees and at different stages in their lives and careers. Considering the different factors that have influenced participants' to engage with SD, the broad areas of expertise and industries worked in, it is not entirely clear how and when interviewees' interest has emerged and what exactly triggered it.

Showing a concern in contemporary issues in business and society does not automatically suggest that participants agree with or embrace sustainability or SD from a conceptual viewpoint and might even be critical towards it. This is highlighted in comments made by four interviewees from all cases. While one sees SD as "an extension of really good operations/manufacturing management" (see Sheldon, Case A, section 4.2.4), another individual points out that his interest is from a professional stand point rather than a personal one (see Barney, Case C, Table 4.16). Moreover, one interviewee puts SD "under the need for change umbrella" rather than a concept in its own right, while a colleague admits, "Is it something that I'm really interested in? Probably not" (see Chandler & Joey, Case B, Table 4.10). Even though these individuals engage with SD, their different approaches suggest that, there is no single, homogenous approach to SD among the participants and that views are often nuanced.

Overall, it seems that an interest in SD, although developed at different times of peoples' lives, has been dormant in the background and can be either connected to values and personal beliefs that have evolved over time, through upbringing, and the multi-faceted professional and personal experience. The level of and general interest in sustainability and/or SD therefore, does not depend on institutional contexts, however could be fostered as seen above in Case B where individuals emphasise values and beliefs that they identify with and that are supported by the business school and the institution as a whole. Furthermore, in all but particularly case studies A and C, one individual was more critical about SD as a concept and its promotion, with two

individuals in Case B sharing the aforementioned notion. Even though some critical voices did not align with the overall concept of SD, they were nevertheless involved in driving ESD forward.

## **5.3 ESD Commitment of Business Schools**

ESD and other related areas such as responsible management education, or citizenship are promoted in all three business schools and their respective institutions. However, the degree of integration and ways to achieve this differ among the schools and institutions. The following section looks at differences and commonalities on a strategy and policy level, operations, teaching and research, as well as good practice across all cases.

### **5.3.1 Institutional policies**

Policy and strategy information, were available and accessible on all institutions websites. While the strategic content is displayed and presented differently, the goals and priorities of all cases show some similarities. This is reflected in the strong focus on growth as a goal across all three cases, more particularly raising institutions profiles either nationally (Case C), internationally (Case A and C) or both (Case B), which underlines the importance of economic sustainability of all cases.

In comparison to A and C, the priorities of Case B are presented and communicated as a long-term plan that focuses on SD to solve contemporary issues, with sustainability clearly mentioned as a main strategy (see Table 5.5). Sustainability is also emphasised in the strategies of Case A and C, but it takes a secondary role and appears to be used as a tool that supports the main strategies, rather than being a main priority in itself. Incorporating SD into strategies and policies shows a commitment to sustainability by HEIs, which also corresponds with the People & Planet league tables and each of the three institutions' rankings, which points to Case B as taking the lead in establishing SD as a core of the University.

Case A and B can be argued to place a higher emphasis on SD by using specific terminology and make more frequent reference to the subject across sub strategies. Furthermore, this brings sustainability and its institutional priorities to the foreground of strategic documents, depending on the frequency and use of terminology and reference in certain parts or the use in the whole of strategies. Table 5.5 summarizes the strategic priorities of all cases, highlighting dimensions affected and values emphasised.

Case B and C present three strategic priorities, while Case A refers to eight specific points. Strategic priorities across all cases are similar in the sense that all Universities place a strong focus on teaching and research. Case B in particular, emphasises sustainability as a key priority alongside teaching and researching. While not explicitly referred to within the main strategy by Case C, SD is seen as a dimension that supports and builds the framework to the implementation of the strategic priorities.

All three cases place a high emphasis on building lasting relationships within their local communities. In Case B this is captured in the strategic priority of 'sustainability', while Case C refers more specifically to 'engagement' and Case A points to building sustainable partnerships and education as a change agent that can positively impact the local community.

Table 5.5 Institutional Policies & Strategies

	Case A	Case B	Case C
Priorities	Learning experience Education as a change agent Research Develop academic portfolio Student experience Sustainable partnerships to increase income streams & student numbers Generate income surplus Create sense of community	Teaching Research <b>Sustainability</b>	Research Teaching Engagement
Dimensions	Internationalisation/Growth Staff Students <b>Sustainability</b>	Students Staff <b>Sustainability</b>	Internationalisation People <b>Sustainability</b>
Values	Support Positive relationships Diversity	Intellectual freedom Social justice Diversity Individuals matter Spirituality Creativity	Collaborations Academic freedom Support Democratic Inclusive Critical

The institutional strategies operate across different dimensions, one of which is stakeholders such as such students and staff (Case A & B), and 'people' as referred to by Case C. Case C specifically highlights and underlines that its success is dependent on good staff, while also suggesting how employees can be supported. Although not a strategic priority as in Case B, all institutions refer to sustainability as a dimension that encapsulates the strategic plan. All cases also strongly focus on 'internationalisation', which shows the importance of economic growth. Widening income

streams is a particular issue for A and B that are much smaller and teaching focused, hence more dependent on tuition fees and the strong focus on student recruitment. In comparison to A and C, Case B however does not exemplify economic growth as a dimension but rather focus on students, staff and sustainability, social aspects that are rooted in the values, inclusivity, and the theological history of the institution. While all cases place values at the core of their strategies, Case B more frequently refers back to its roots and decision making that evolves from these values.

Overall, terminology relating to or specifically mentioning sustainability are highlighted in all strategies and policies. The frequency relating to the use of SD terminology within the main and sub strategies are however more evident in Case B, again relating to the institutions strong focus on values and a history that is steeped in inclusivity and equality. Moreover, the business school was established with the key focus on business and its impact on the wider society and environment.

More specific strategies and policies focus on Human Resources (HR) strategy, environmental policies, learning and teaching, research and others, all of which make some mention to the main strategies priorities or SD.

### **5.3.2 Operational Activities**

All institutions show a strong operational and environmental engagement with sustainability, which is embedded in policy documents referred to as Sustainable Development Policy, Environmental Policy, Environmental Strategy, SD and Environmental strategy and others. The policy documents correlate across all three cases, with all institutions involvement in areas such as procurement, transport, carbon, energy, waste and recycling and others (see Table 5.6). The policy documents of both Case A and C are more detailed in providing objectives and targets to reach specific goals within the whole University, whereas Case B uses a more principles based approach in putting forward what the institutions' plans are to integrate SD across the University in the long-run.

Table 5.6 Environmental Strategies &amp; Policies

Case A	Case B	Case C
Biodiversity	Biodiversity	Biodiversity
Carbon	Carbon	Buildings
Construction	Construction	Carbon
Education	Community	Energy
Environmental Governance	Education	Emissions
Environmental management System	Energy	Fairtrade
Fairtrade	Emissions	Food
Legal Compliance	Fairtrade	Grounds & Landscapes
Procurement	Good Management	Procurement
Travel	Procurement	Staff/Students
Utilities Management	Research	Travel
Waste & Recycling	Staff & Students	Water
	Teaching & Learning	Waste & Recycling
	Transport	Utilities Management
	Waste & Recycling	
	Water	

The strategies and policies show a higher focus on green aspects of sustainability integration and mainly focus on operational activities. Although both A and C mention the importance of raising awareness among staff and students, it is B that presents the highest concern of SD and education, and even mentions the importance of professional development to foster and support staff in integrating SD. Furthermore, Case B shows a more consistent use of relevant terminology throughout other strategy and policy documents.

### 5.3.3 Curricular Engagement

The three institutions acknowledge and stress the importance to raise SD awareness among staff and students, in order to work towards more sustainable behaviour. The business schools offer modules in SD, CSR, Business Ethics and other related areas across their programmes of study (see Table 5.7). Case A is the only business school that offers dedicated sustainability programmes, both at UG and PG level. Case B and C both have predominantly generic business and management programmes of study with C offering one specialised course that includes some SD aspects.

Table 5.7 SD Modules and Programmes

	Case A	Case B	Case C
<b>Dedicated SD Programmes of Study</b>	Yes – both UG and PG	No	Yes – one at UG level
	Some core modules Some electives	Core modules Additional electives	Some core modules Some electives
	Some core modules Some electives	Core modules Additional electives	Some core modules Some electives

A closer look at the modules offered shows that Case B is the only business school that offers a core module on SD in all its UG programmes and most of its PG taught programmes. The compulsory module exposes all undergraduates to SD and the majority of PG students. Postgraduate courses, where not a core subject, are more likely to offer optional modules rather than compulsory ones. Case A and C on the other hand, do not offer core modules on all their business courses. Dedicated modules can be found on some of their UG and PG courses, of which some are core and some optional. SD is not only a core strategy of Case B, but the business school also communicates this widely on their website and makes frequent mention of the concept as a building block of the business curriculum. An interviewee notes (see section 4.3.4) that students frequently pursue projects and dissertations on SD issues, which highlights a distinct focus and culture within the business school. In comparison, both A and C do not communicate sustainability as strongly and as a key part of their institutional being.

Although SD modules are only limited to some programmes of study at Case A, an analysis of all courses and their content throughout the University found that there is a wider engagement with SD across the whole University and more business courses than expected, “though it might not be called that at all” (Raj, Case A). Considering this, the exposure of SD relevant knowledge to students and engagement of academics might be higher than assumed across all business schools. Nevertheless, the institution acknowledges the issues it faces to incorporate SD within teaching and learning across the whole University. Compared to the other two, Case C offers a higher number and more diverse range of business courses, including degree collaborations with other departments in the University. In terms of SD integration, efforts and engagement appears to vary throughout the school (see section 4.4.3.2).

What is notable is that almost all interviewees have experience outside of HE and incorporate their industry background into their teaching and research. Previous industry based roles and business connections open up a host of possibilities for students and colleagues alike. This includes the collaboration with external organisations and integration of practice based assessments into teaching. Business experience and industry relationships are also described as key selling points to future students as having “the industry voice...and we understand what industry are after” (Howard, Case A). Building business relationships is also encouraged in Case B to the degree where organisations can actively engage in learning and teaching. However, it is not clear to what extent this engagement is pursued and what the overall goal is, other than a presumed financial benefit.

Engaging students with SD, but also fostering their critical thinking is consistently mentioned throughout strategic documents and in interviews with participants. This is attempted in various ways and very much depends on individuals, their background and experience. Examples include encouraging students’ “creative thinking” (Monika, Case B) and suggestions to develop academics’ own scientific knowledge to teach SD to students because “to get them to believe it, you’ve gotta get to understand it” (Ross, Case B).

### **5.3.4 Academic Research**

Case A and B are teaching focused, however both business schools are setting out expectations towards academic staff to engage with research. These expectations refer to one or two research outputs per year, whether this is a conference paper, publishing an article and others. Although the output varies and can be as little as presenting at a conference, fulfilling these expectations presents a challenge with existing workloads and the amount of teaching expected to be done. Participants from both business schools struggle to undertake research in general, let alone SD related, which is to some degree undertaken by the participants and other ESD enthusiasts. However, interviewees highlight the expectations and reality of undertaking research and the priority put on teaching in teaching led Universities (see sections 4.3.3.2 & 4.2.3.2). Given that research is primarily undertaken in one’s own area of specialism, it is not clear how much of the research output amounts and relates to SD.

Case C on the other hand is more research led and has a reputation and strong track record of publications. The University is larger, and employs more staff members that hold different positions, catering to more research intense versus teaching focused academic roles. Research expectations therefore vary and are dependent on each individual’s role and department

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affiliation (see section 4.4.3.2), which allows for a more structured approach in teaching and research depending on one's own interest.

The commitment towards SD research can be seen in the establishment of dedicated research centres in Case B and C, with both business schools specialist centres that focus on business and society issues and the promotion of dedicated research. In addition, both business schools have hired new and specialist staff to drive the centres' SD activities forward and support existing academics in increasing their research output. In particular, the Dean in Case C highlights the centres strategic importance to the business school as "a flagship element" (Barney, Case C).

Meanwhile, Case A is in the process of following suit and setting up a new research centre as part of a larger development within the business school, as well as a wider strategy to boost the region. The research centre will not exclusively focus on SD, but will be part of a larger project to integrate STEM related subjects within the business school (see section 4.2.3.2). Case A and B are pre-dominantly teaching focused and it is not clear to what extent the dedicated research centres create the envisioned research output. In comparison, Case C has the size and financial income to drive research to a stronger extent.

### 5.3.5 Good Practice

All cases engage with, and support, different initiatives such as working with the HEA's Green Academy or NUS's Green Impact programmes to promote sustainable behaviour. However, SD engagement is mostly driven by enthusiasts and examples of best practice primarily involve dedicated individuals, with an interest in the subject area within the business schools.

Participants in Case A refer to ESD enthusiasts as 'pockets of good practice', more specifically small groups of dedicated staff across campus, one of which is located in the business school and consists of the academics interviewed as well as a few additional staff. While these groups keep SD engagement on the radar, there is notable frustration about the lack of institutional and individual engagement among interviewees in integrating sustainability activities more widely across the business school and the University as a whole.

"You know you get these fantastic people that are really committed to Sustainability and that are really driving... making things happen and wanting to make things happen and then you find these huge contradictions of people... that would pay lip service to being sustainable" (Lennard, Case A)

With a greater focus on ESD and a foundation on responsible management education Case B ensures that academics are exposed to, and therefore aware of the aims and objectives that drive a more sustainable teaching and learning experience. Moreover, the importance of SD is continuously communicated, and highlighted as a key aspect by the Dean of the business school. This can further influence academics' work ethic and engagement, as it corresponds with individuals' values and beliefs (see section 4.3.3.3). Nevertheless, here too a further engagement depends on individuals' interests as outlined by one interviewee who claims only a core group actively pursues SD outside of their teaching responsibilities (see section 5.4). The same is also true for Case C that depends on enthusiastic academics to raise awareness of SD. While support is provided to a degree by the Dean in the form of recognition of the importance of ESD, the overall responsibility to take this further is left up to Associate Deans (see section 4.4.4 & 4.4.5) and individuals who are interested in sustainability.

All interviewees engage with SD in one form or another as highlighted in Appendix H, including areas such as teaching, research, and campus projects. However, communication of SD and its importance to the whole business school is only consistently conveyed in Case B, as opposed to cases A and C, leading to an exposure of SD of all business academics. But some critical comments by outspoken interviewees raise the question whether any good practice across the three cases still heavily relies on 'pockets of good practice'.

## 5.4 Common Challenges to ESD Integration

### 5.4.1 Staff Engagement

Staff engagement is one of the biggest challenges across all three business schools. As mentioned above, existing involvement with ESD is mainly due to academics who are interested in and already engaged with the subject, so-called enthusiasts. What is more prominent is the perception of staff engagement with ESD.

The interviews revealed that participants across all cases have different perceptions on the level of staff engagement of their colleagues across departments and the business schools as a whole, whether this relates to a general awareness of, and understanding of the broader subject area, or an active engagement and interest. Additionally, interviewees also showed differing expectations on what constitutes engagement compared to their own involvement.

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Case A for example, struggles to keep the momentum going to involve colleagues beyond the short-term, but participants overall agree that academic engagement is a problem. Similarly, Case B with its existing strong focus on sustainability appears to have issues of staff engagement. One interviewee suggests that the perception of a strong sustainability focus in Case B is deceiving and asserts that SD is driven by a “core of advocates, not a lot of advocates” (see section 4.3.4.1). This view is not shared by all participants from Case B with Rachel pointing out, senior management “can’t imagine staff not engaging, because I don’t think they’d be recruited if they didn’t engage” (see section 4.3.4.1).

Differences in perception are found in Case C too. While one interviewee points out that there are differences across the business school (see Marshall, section 4.4.3.2), the Dean paints a more positive picture and emphasises the degree of acceptance among academics towards SD, by also acknowledging that the main focus comes from existing advocates, a view that is shared by the other participants from the school. Nevertheless, the implementation itself is left to others. With a change in heads of department every three years, implementing ESD can lead to disruptions due to differing priorities and strategies.

Whether ESD is a core of the business school (Case B) or not (Case A & C), all cases show varying perceptions on engagement and what it entails. Academic engagement is also viewed and approached differently by more senior academics such as Head of Schools or departments and the relevant support provided. Case B for example, shows support from senior managers to integrate ESD and encourages research and engagement. While this can also be attributed to Case A, where the Head of School drives the development of a research centre, it is not clear beyond this initiative how ESD integration is supported. A fellow colleague even questions other academics on their genuine attitude and contribution to SD (see section 4.2.4.1).

Staff engagement also extends into working with colleagues from one’s own department or school. Here too, appear to be gaps and disparities in all cases. Some participants are very active in approaching working relationships, predominantly the ones who are enthusiastic about ESD, while others do not. However, even those participants who reach out do not always pursue opportunities or follow up on them (see Phoebe, Case B, section 4.3.4.1).

While time constraints and campus locations play a role in hindering collaborations and were mentioned by interviewees in Case A and B, a lapse in time seems to push initiatives on the backburner or might be forgotten after all. It was also noted that the encouragement by the business school in Case B to undertake collaborations across departments and faculties was missing as mentioned by one academic (see Rachel, Case B, section 4.3.4.1).

Additionally, another issue is highlighted that connects working relationships with colleagues to an individualistic tendency of academics who predominantly focus on their own advancement, as well as disparities between teaching and research staff, a view proposed by one participant (see Chandler, Case B, section 4.3.4.1).

All cases are offering events such as presentations, guest speakers and trainings initiated by ESD enthusiasts to involve a wider audience of academics and raise awareness of the subject, but these often lack attendees. While there are a variety of events in Case C, it is not clear to what degree staff engage. However, participants from both Cases A (see section 4.2.4.1) and B (see section 4.3.4.1) reported a lack of attendance and engagement for these events.

#### **5.4.2 Student Involvement**

Involving students with SD is consistently challenging across all business schools, which does not guarantee any student engagement or success to promote sustainability initiatives, even with dedicated staff and the work with student unions. Difficulties across the schools and institutions in general relate to enthusing students other than a small minority that is committed, as highlighted by one interviewee in Case C (see section 4.4.4.2).

The aforementioned issue seems to resonate with Case A, where the business school focuses on 'students as partners', however with mixed results. Even where ambassadors are trained up to raise awareness across campus, the motivation to promote SD varies and also lacks the involvement of the student union as outlined below. Similar issues are also mentioned in Case B, including a remark emphasising undergraduate students' age and University experience that sets the tone for engagement as "they've got a million and one other things going on in their lives, including their University studies" in relation to engagement (see Phoebe, Case B). Equally, here the student union shows varying degrees of involvement to promote SD projects and activities and raise students' awareness.

Collaborations with student unions are critical in raising students' awareness and engagement in all cases. Attempts to find a common ground have been made by all institutions. Case C has been the most successful and has established a relationship with the SU in promoting multiple green initiatives and activities across campus, mutually funded by the University and the union, and projects led by the estates department. Whether the business school is involved in these projects is not clear, however the Environment Manager leads these initiatives and paints a positive picture of the collaboration (see section 4.4.4.2).

Case A and B however, have seen more mixed results. Issues are primarily in prioritising SD within the unions' strategies, the dependency on dedicated staff, including annual changes in presidents and officers (see section 4.3.4.2), and the resources to devote time, funding and interested staff to support the concept. Case A in particular had difficulties with the student union, and the lack of responsiveness, with one interviewee referring the issue to a lack of the union's political engagement (see section 4.2.4.2). Postgraduates seem to differ in terms of experience, with executive MBA students showing a higher sense of urgency for Sustainability issues as pointed out by Ross (Case B), who is clearly frustrated with the profit driven attitude of some MBA students (see section 4.3.4.2).

Although all cases encounter issues with student engagement and have mixed results in promoting SD, some remarks paint a more positive picture, for example in Case B and the impact that core modules in programmes of study can have on students. Not only does it influence students' choices but also increases decisions to work on SD specific subjects and incorporate these into their projects and assignments. But as one interviewee points out "whether that has any lasting impact beyond the University is untested" (Chandler, Case B).

### **5.4.3 Resource Provision**

Resources are an inherent issue in all cases, whether it is a lack of time of academics to dedicate time to ESD due to large workloads, funding, or the provision and allocation of knowledgeable and interested academic staff to support existing or new initiatives. Participants from Cases A and B mentioned similar issues and strongly associated ESD integration to aforementioned resource issues, whereas interviewees responses in Case C where mixed.

With additional responsibilities, increased tutoring and mentoring duties (Case A), and the large amount of teaching (Case A & B), time is one of the biggest problems to fulfil one's job role and engage with any other activities. This is an issue specifically relating to participants from Case A and B, mostly due to their focus on teaching and dependency on income through students. An increase in students' tutoring time in Case A is especially relevant, as it relates to increasing student performance and satisfaction in light of the newly established TEF, which adds additional pressure on academics.

A lack of time can spill over into actively engaging with ESD research and collaborations across the business schools and Universities, even more so where institutions have campuses in different locations. Busy schedules can also lead to being overworked and further inhibit collaborations

with colleagues in other departments and schools (see Case B). Prioritising tasks is therefore important and often leaves academics in Case A and B to focus first and foremost on teaching and student engagement. Any additional SD activities are expected to be completed in one's own time as mentioned by a participant from Case A. However, given the reliance on tuition fee income, student satisfaction and therefore teaching related aspects of academics' job roles have to be pursued first in order to meet funding needs as outlined by one senior interviewee from Case B (see section 4.3.4.4).

Funding is a concern primarily for Cases A and B as they have a lower income than Case C. Financial aspects can influence funding of SD projects and initiatives, but also affect what conferences and events academics can attend, depending on their allocated budget. Funding is specifically an issue in Case A and leads to very active academics to scout for any external funding, while not relying on the institution (see section 4.2.4.3).

Case B has a higher income than Case A, which is also supported through a more ESD focused strategy within the business school and the institution, making funds more readily available. Nevertheless, both business schools cannot keep up with bigger Universities to allocate more funding to academics, which is increasingly also becoming more competitive. Where funding is not available it was found that at least one interviewee (see Ross, Case B) frequently funded trips to conferences and events and admitted the perils of working for a smaller institution (see section 4.3.4.4). While the latter shows commitment, it also highlights the personal involvement and investment of enthusiasts and raises questions to the degree of support provided by institutions.

With an income of well over £100m (see Table 5.1), Case C shows higher earnings than both other cases. However, even here funding provided by the University cannot always be relied upon, particularly in the estates department that supports green initiatives and works closely with the SU where the department will only find out throughout the year of allocated funding (see section 4.4.4.4). While not an issue to date, the lack of clarity on the budget available can potentially hamper SD activities.

An issue mentioned by a number of participants from all cases is the provision and allocation of staff. This includes the recruitment of dedicated academics to teach Sustainability specific modules, rather than allocating teaching to the next available person, but also sufficient support staff in the estates and facilities departments. One participant from Case B explains the issue within the business school to attract and retain academics who teach in particular Business Ethics but also the misconception of the simplicity of ethics and related subjects (see section 4.3.4.4).

It was also noted that two interviewees from Case B were on part-time or fixed-term contracts within the University. While a part-time academic role still constituted to full-time hours for one participant, another interviewee within a dedicated sustainability position was not even sure if she would still be in employment after the contracted period, adding uncertainty to the position and work she was carrying out. Moreover, the ambiguity about work prospects led the individual to hold back with some SD engagement, suggestions and propositions to senior management (see section 4.3.4.4). Interestingly, the provision of a temporary post dedicated to SD stands in contrast to the Universities long-term commitment to SD.

A further interviewee in Case A, although within a permanent position, has 26 hours a week as part of her employment contract, clearly not enough to deliver on and integrate SD across the University (Penny, Case A). Similarly, there is a need for more dedicated staff in Case C, which has come a long way according to its Environmental Manager (Marshall, Case C). Nevertheless, to widen the educational aspects of SD, Case C needs to recruit more specialist academics who will integrate ESD into the curriculum. Overall, it can be said that all business schools are struggling with staff allocation, which includes dedicated SD roles that tend to be a part of estates and facilities.

#### **5.4.4 Communication of ESD Practices and Activities**

Each individual interviewed showed a great interest in, and a considerable knowledge of his or her area of expertise. For the majority of the participants ESD stood in the foreground, while some individuals prioritised the subject lower depending on other interests. Despite the high interest, all participants showed a lack of awareness of activities of colleagues within their respective departments, schools or institution as a whole, as well as more specific knowledge on the strategic stance of organisations and strategy documents of their institutions.

On an organisational level, several interviewees mentioned that the lack of disseminating information and communicating best practice across the business school and the University presented an issue. This is in particular an issue at Case C that is not only the biggest institution out of the three cases looked at, but has a higher number of departments and academics employed in the business school, which can complicate the diffusion of information. Whether it relates to spreading the word about events across campus, good SD practice as pointed out by one interviewee “sometimes you kind of don’t really hear about things. Perhaps it’s more by luck than anything else” (Robin, Case C), or key promotional strategies to market sustainability courses to the appropriate audiences (see section 4.3.4.3). Even within smaller business schools such as

Case B, where communication of SD activities and good practice is happening on a more frequent level, staff and student engagement are still low.

Communicating the strategic priority of ESD by the Dean or Vice Chancellor can strengthen the meaning of a business school's mission. Case B, shows statements of both the Dean of the Business School and Vice Chancellor commanding and emphasising the importance of sustainability within the institution, with the VC in Case A referring to its importance in the institutions strategy. In contrast, Case C lacks a support statement by the VC in support of Sustainability. In addition, the Dean at the business school leaves ESD integration up to Associate Deans and Programme Directors who directly deal with curricular work (see section 4.4.4.3).

On an individual level, several participants in Case A and C were not aware of SD communication within the University and lacked a detailed knowledge of institutional strategies set out, even though specific documents are available on the institutions' websites. In general, there seems to be a vague understanding among some interviewees of the strategic direction taken by business schools and their institutions in both A and C (see Robin, Case C, Sheldon, Case A).

In Case A, several participants were not aware of the progress made in establishing the new research centre, specifically Raj and Penny who are not in the business school, but also situated on a different campus in a different city. Similarly, even though a part of the business school, one interviewee highlighted the lack of information and communication of being kept in the loop (see section 4.2.4.4).

A lack of communication is also present in Case B, where one participant is struggling to understand how her role in the estates department links to the business school (Phoebe, Case B). The lack of involvement is also highlighted in the fact that both departments are located on different campuses. Again, campus location plays an important role and effects communication but also collaboration across both cases A and B, including the effort made to visit other sites (see sections, 4.3.4.3 & 4.2.4.3)

Overall, there appear to be deficiencies in communication between academics but also support staff, whether it is in the same department, the business school or other schools across the institution. Specifically, if other academics are physically separated by working in different locations and campuses (such as Case A and B) or where academics were not a part of the business school (Case A) and not directly involved in projects relating to business. However, even where individuals are working within the same department and office, they lack updating each other on the progress of the work that they are doing as explained by Phoebe in Case B (see section 4.3.4.3). A lack of communication is also evident in other participants, who can be seen as

important figures in driving ESD within the business school, with one individual (Ross, Case B) mentioning the lack of teaching that he is doing, but does not know why and does not appear to have an interest to find out why (see section 4.3.4.3).

The lack of communication within the business schools (but also corresponding individuals in estates or facilities) further highlights an issue raised by a participant in Case B on promoting and celebrating own successes of good practice, which can affect collaborations and impact their own work. Here in particular, the promotion of one's own work is highlighted and a lack of any engagement of other colleagues with it at all (Chandler, Case B). While this not only affects individuals' engagement with each other it also points to more deep seated issues across academia and the role of academics, which will be analysed in the following sections.

## **5.5 Institutional Support to ESD Integration**

The perception of support provided to integrate ESD varies among individuals, but is mainly viewed as positive. Participants in Case A (see section 4.2.5, Table 4.6) showed a more positive perception of support the more outgoing and pro-active interviewees were. Responses in Case B (see 4.3.4.5, Table 4.12) indicated an overall satisfaction with the support provided with one individual noting that support was not necessary given his experience, but that he was rather in a position to support others. A greater satisfaction could be associated with an overall support of responsible management in the Business School and the focus the institution places on Sustainability. Answers in Case C (see section 4.4.5, Table 4.18) were positive by three participants, with one individual who did not supply a clear answer, but exclaimed that more could be done in providing additional staff to support the team. In addition, as a facilitator to support staff himself, the Dean did not provide an answer to support provided to him by the VC and senior management team.

A commitment to ESD can be seen in all cases with strategies in place to integrate SD across the Universities and additional statements of support by the Vice Chancellors of Case A and B in the respective policy documents. In comparison, there is no Vice Chancellor message in Case C mentioning Sustainability. All documents point out that there is a high focus on staff as important drivers to support University plans. However, despite Vice Chancellor messages on SD, perceptions and views of interviewees differ on a genuine interest of their University leadership team as exemplified by two contrasting individuals, with one calling into question the altruism of institutional leadership.

"I'm sure the guy [Vice Chancellor] probably has incredible sustainable beliefs and credentials, but those don't actually translate to actions on the ground" (Lennard, Case A)

[The Vice Chancellor is] "very approachable. We're lucky in that it's, clearly Sustainability and climate change is...is high on her agenda. So she takes it very seriously and almost anything we can do... to make the University a leader in that kind of thing, she is... keen to support. It seems to be anyway" (Phoebe, Case B).

The Deans or Heads of each Business School support the implementation of ESD, but all show different levels of interest and engagement. Case A for example has the support from the Head of School, which is driving the establishment of a new centre, while in Case C, although supported by the Dean, the implementation is left to Directors of Teaching and Research, rather than getting engaged more closely (see sections 4.4.4, 4.4.5). Support also trickles down to department heads and their interest and engagement across all cases. In particular, Case C shows differences in the departments and the priorities put forward, something that can change every three years with the appointment of new heads (see section 4.4.4).

However, it appears that Case B is more open to supporting SD endeavours of staff even where heads of departments showed less of an interest in Sustainability as exemplified by Joey who expresses his thoughts about support from his position and further up the management chain. Support by the Head of School can also be evidenced in a detailed report on responsible management education, highlighting the importance of SD and a personal interest in the subject.

Participants of all cases have a provision of funds they can use to undertake research, and attend conferences and other events relative to their schools and organisations income. Most interviewees in Case C did not express a shortage of funding, except one who principally was happy with the funding received, however mentioned a lack of certainty to the budget available. Case A and B have the lowest income, which requires staff to take part in free or more inexpensive events. However, as mentioned earlier (see section 4.3.4.5) one staff member in Case B attends conferences and events regardless of the costs and the allocated provision for staff by personally investing into opportunities. Additionally, while funding has a limit, the financial support described is available and it is said that "Ethics is treated as every bit as fundamental a part of what we're doing" (Joey, Case B).

Where engaged with other academics who share an interest in SD, the support among participants in each case has been mainly positive with praise for other colleagues. Working together can even go as far as inspiring others and drawing them out of there comfort zone as

highlighted in Case A where interviewees involved a colleague from another faculty, something that has had a tremendous impact on this individual's learning as he highlights:

“He’s really encouraged me to push the boundaries of what I’m doing, doing it in a different way. Sort of trying to think outside the usual structure of how I work” (Raj, Case A)

Senior and experienced academics interviewed are also notably more aware and happy to support junior colleagues in both Cases A and B. Case C saw a mixture of replies with the Dean delegating ESD integration and further activities to programme directors, highlighting the size of the Business School.

Academics have the freedom to engage with SD and other related areas and as exemplified in Case A, “if you have a bit of initiative and you wanna do something, that’s gonna enhance the student experience, pretty much you have free reign to do it” (Howard, Case A). Nevertheless, this includes the willingness to work with and support colleagues that one might not be comfortable working with, but might also require an outgoing and positive attitude to approach staff members (see Chandler, Case C, 4.3.4.3). However, engaging with and supporting colleagues also depends on individuals confidence and pro activity to approach others (see Monika, Case B, section 4.3.5.3), which seems to differ among all interviewees.

## 5.6 ESD Learning and Development

Learning and development is approached similarly across all the business schools, with an institutional provision of professional development opportunities that offer generic training such as applying for grants, IT seminars, and a wide range of soft skills workshops. More specific academic development that focuses on individuals' career advancements are set out in collaboration with the line managers, Heads of Departments, or other senior management staff. All three business schools offer academics the provision to further development and achievement of HE teaching qualifications and teaching and research support in general.

### 5.6.1 Formal versus Non-formal Learning

It emerged that interviewees learning takes place mostly through informal (or non-formal) means, rather than formal opportunities. Formal opportunities in all institutions mostly relate to generic

professional development programmes offered by each individual institution rather than SD specific training, except in Case A. More specialist SD learning and development may, or may not, be pursued through external bodies or more SD specific organisations and research groups. Table 5.8<sup>53</sup> below shows a breakdown of commonalities across the different business schools and the themes identified across all three cases of how individuals learn. Replies were grouped under the four themes of networking, research, good practice, and learning and development. Responses of participants from all cases highlighted non-formal ways such as researching, writing and reading to stay up-to-date with the latest research in their field.

Table 5.8 Individual SD Learning and Development

	Case A	Case B	Case C
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conferences</li> <li>- events</li> <li>- business</li> <li>- webinars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- guest speakers</li> <li>- experts</li> <li>- conferences</li> <li>- experienced colleagues</li> <li>- sharing best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conferences</li> <li>- special interest groups</li> <li>- presentations</li> <li>- webinars,</li> <li>- LinkedIn</li> <li>- business</li> <li>- membership bodies</li> </ul>
<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reading</li> <li>- writing</li> <li>- article submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- writing</li> <li>- reviewing articles</li> <li>- submitting articles</li> <li>- up-to-date literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- academic newsletters</li> <li>- reading</li> <li>- cross-disciplinary collaborations</li> <li>- journal subscriptions</li> <li>- books</li> </ul>
<b>Good Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listening</li> <li>- watching</li> <li>- being aware</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- checking all responsibilities</li> <li>- being</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specialist bodies</li> <li>- in-house training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training courses</li> <li>- learning by doing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- environmental legislation training</li> </ul>

Research as a tool to facilitate learning covers all cases, with the majority of learning taking place through individuals own involvement in contributing to knowledge accumulation, by reading, writing, researching and others as highlighted under the theme of 'research'. Additionally, 'networking' by attending conferences and bespoke events were mentioned as other non-formal

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<sup>53</sup> A more detailed breakdown of interviewees learning and development can be found in Appendix I.

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opportunities to learn about the latest SD research and network with other researchers. The responses provided, show that learning among participants often takes place through fellow academics in the field, guest speakers, memberships with interest specific bodies and organisations, and the resulting collaborations. While some interviewees collaborate with other academics and support staff in their business school and University, many collaborations and subsequent learning develops through an extended network within individuals' areas of expertise.

Responses were similar across all cases, with only two participants mentioning best practice as a way of learning about ESD, and two interviewees indicating that cross-disciplinary work contributes to their learning (Lily, Case C and Raj, Case A). The fourth theme of 'learning and development' covers training offered through specialist bodies such as the HEA, mentioned across cases A and B, as well as in-house specialist SD training in Case A. Only one respondent mentioned professional development of SD in terms of environmental legislation that needed to be kept up-to-date.

### **5.6.2 Learning and Development Provisions**

Academic learning is seen as an important aspect of ESD integration. Two participants in particular emphasised this, with one pointing out that "if you don't understand the real meaning...the great potential, the reason behind sustainability and responsibility in business yeah...there's no sense to teach this module" (Monika, Case B). Equally important when learning about SD is the ability for academics to understand the content they teach, with Ross pointing out that "to get them to believe it you've gotta get to understand it" (Ross, Case B). Nevertheless, while both participants agree on the importance of learning, the developmental aspect and putting these measures into practice are viewed differently. Out of all interviewees, four referred to and were open to development courses as a way to learn about SD, three from Case A and one from Case B. Nevertheless, there were differences in how this would be realised in practice. The different perceptions on learning are more apparent when introducing a formal or even compulsory aspect of learning and development to the discussion, with the majority of interviewees opposing these measures as discussed below (see section 5.6.3).

Formal learning on ESD as part of institutional development schemes are only offered by Case A. Trainings included refer to sustainable procurement, a one-day training that is incorporating the use of global citizenship, and an environmental management training, alongside green events that are organized by the Sustainability Assistant. One formal learning opportunity for academics is offered through HR and conducted by one of the participants himself (Howard, Case A). The

session is optional and its aim is to support academics who want to integrate SD into their modules and courses. The uptake of the optional seminars by fellow academics however is low and proves a continuing issue. Given the challenges mentioned above (see section 5.4.3) it is no surprise that there is a lack of interest and engagement in opportunities that add to individual's existing workload.

While both Case B and C do not offer any learning and development provisions on ESD, it was mentioned that the induction for new staff at Case B includes a presentation about the values, environmental activities and goals of the University. This event only takes place twice a year with new staff members. However, one participant (Joey, Case B) contemplates about the positive impact a formal ESD learning and development programme could have by stimulating critical thinking and engagement of staff, if training opportunities were optional rather than obligatory (see section 4.3.6.1).

Where needed academics can use their allocated funds to go on dedicated trainings facilitated through other HEIs or membership bodies such as the British Academy of Management (BAM), HEA and others. Training where available in the three business schools refers to broad research and teaching skills seminars that can be used to share and network with others, where time allows.

### **5.6.3 Academic Role and ESD Learning**

There is a divide between interviewees across all cases on the benefits of ESD learning and development within business schools, or even going as far as embedding compulsory training for academics, which is not seen as effective by all. Opinions of all participants are mixed with some individuals open to the idea of formalising ESD professional development as it is seen as a "starting point" but also a "more systemic way to start your teaching career" as suggested by one participant (see Monika, Case B). Several interviewees mentioned the usefulness of a system or structure in place, specifically for staff not familiar with ESD, with suggestions to increase awareness through "different case studies or alumni profiles, different guest speakers" (Robin, Case C). Alternatively, it was proposed to introduce the concept at "a very basic level so that part of our staff induction was about the sustainability and encouraging people to make conscious decisions" (Joey, Case B). While raising awareness as mentioned by Robin above, it is also worth noting that events with guest speakers and presentations have been mentioned to lack the uptake of interest and attendance (see section 5.4.1).

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While most interviewees across all cases are open to learning and development, the majority are more critical when it comes to a formalised aspect of ESD training. Some interviewees were more critical and expressed their concern of formal development. While one respondent from Case B is “not sure what they [the University] could offer that we are not capable of going out and getting ourselves” (Rachel, Case B), another colleague struggles with the concept of formalizing ESD as part of an internal development programme, stating difficulties to do so (Ross, Case B). Much of academic learning takes place through individuals’ efforts to research and collaborate as mentioned above, and is done on one’s own accord in conjunction with the freedom to pursue research in one’s own area of specialism. Meddling with academics’ freedom might explain an aversion to more institutional learning and development, which would explain the degree of scepticism among interviewees.

Understanding the wider concepts of ESD within ones job role through more formal learning and development opportunities was addressed in more detail by a supporter of the idea. He pointed out the significance of designing and teaching those trainings by stating that LD “has to be delicately designed... So those trainings should be tailor made, should be carefully designed and should be delivered by at least people like me or better than me” (Ted, Case C). The above is supported by a colleague who emphasises the importance of training the trainer and collaborating with other schools and departments when integrating ESD, more specifically engineering and business and vice versa (Lily, Case C).

Concerns of formal ESD learning and development provisions, and also compulsory training are suggested to lead to yet another tick box exercise or something that staff “would probably ignore” (Lennard, Case A). For some interviewees, a more compulsory approach goes even further and creates a suspicion and distrust of the intentions of the ESD agenda, in particular where own HE studies have resonated around traditional business theories on profit maximisation (Chandler, Case B). Similarly, it was suggested that ESD should not be treated as something that stands out but rather as an inherent part of business and management as it otherwise causes suspicions (see section 4.4.4.3). Whereas the latter view presents the ideal state of ESD integration, something that is an inherent part of business education, research shows that business schools, not just in the UK, are a long way from reaching this goal (see section 2.3.5).

Other participants question the importance of learning and development in ESD integration by queering its effectiveness in terms of convincing academics to involve in this training, but also the overall outcome and results on behavioural change in staff. Both Head of Schools of Case A and C do not perceive ESD training as useful and of value, though important otherwise. While the Head in Case A suggests to use learning and development to open up conversations about ESD to

increase engagement, the Head in Case C suggests incentives and rewards to bait academics into involvement. With Case B there appears to be an underlying expectation that interest in ESD is present in academic staff members at the business school. None of the business schools and institutions however, have incentives and rewards in place to foster staff engagement, and drive interest and activities with ESD (see Penny, Case A).

The above comments are in line with other critical responses made by a few participants from all cases. Some interviewees revealed their concern about how formalising ESD learning could impact the already demanding role of academics and the associated academic freedom by deterring individuals from even engaging. In particular, the freedom to research and teach is noted as a sensitive topic in as far as that HEIs cannot force academics to engage with ESD or as one participant said, “ramming it down peoples’ throats” (Joey, Case B).

Rather than having business schools or Universities provide specific ESD training that is difficult to organise and plan in a small organisation, it is suggested that academics should become members of specialist bodies, organisations and interest groups to establish their own networks and foster collaborations within the field. One participant referred to these as “learning societies” that open up the reach of academics to individuals in the field of study and where he explains, “you build your networks” (Ross, Case B). However, this suggestion does not present any new ideas but rather points out what academics are already doing to develop professionally and network. In addition, it does not address the inherent issue of establishing an institution wide approach to engaging academics (and support staff) beyond their existing contribution to their specialist area.

In contrast to the above comments and concerns of most participants, a more radical suggestion refers to making ESD training compulsory. However, this view was only shared by one participant who notes “I would put it as required. You’re gonna lose some people and those probably are the people that are quite useful to lose. And if you have a good incentive structure it works” (Lily, Case C). Given the concerns raised, the radical approach suggested by Lily would presumably not be popular among academics.

Conducting institutional ESD learning and development also raises questions on who would take on the responsibility to undertake these trainings, with one participant highlighting “I think because it’s not a single department’s responsibility it becomes nobody’s responsibility” (Robin, Case C). Ross (Case B) shares a similar opinion and reinforces his view on learning societies and the inclusion of external experts rather than focusing solely on internal training, which requires contemplating who takes on responsibility. Contrary in Case C, the Environment Manager highly emphasises the need for a structural approach across the whole institution and the appointment

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of a department or school to lead on ESD and collaboratively work across the University (Marshall, Case C).

Instead of pushing or forcing academics to engage with ESD, it is suggested that incentives and rewards are a better options to get staff on board. However, even here views differ on how this can be achieved. Specifically Case C shows differences among participants' views on using incentives or rewards and exerting a greater force to convince academics to involve with SD. But again, views diverge from favouring voluntary options and practical guidance given (Marshall, Case C), to the other end of the spectrum with propositions to link funding strictly to engagement as financial support cannot be expected to be free (Lily, Case C).

### **5.7 Summary**

Chapter 5 has presented a cross-case analysis of all three business schools. The chapter compared three case studies and particularly looked at similarities and differences between the business schools. It highlighted the distinct backgrounds and institutional differences of the cases, as well as commonalities and variances in integrating ESD, while highlighting learning and development. The next chapter will focus on putting the findings into context, by discussing and answering the research questions set out in Chapter 1.

# Chapter 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 6.1 Overview

The following chapter will discuss the research findings of the within-case and cross-case analysis presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. It aims to answer the research questions set forth in Chapter 1 and discuss the findings in relation to existing literature presented in Chapter 2. The discussion focuses on four research questions that guided the empirical research process and research design.

**RQ1** What are UK Business Schools doing to integrate ESD into the curriculum, and what roles do individual academics play?

**RQ2** How do academics perceive the support given by their school/University to integrate ESD into research and teaching and what is their perception on learning and development?

**RQ3** How are UK Business Schools contributing to ESD learning and development of academic staff?

**RQ4** What hinders the provision of formal ESD learning and development opportunities and how does this impact ESD integration?

The first section seeks to address RQ1 by identifying contributions of UK business schools to integrate ESD relating to strategic and policy aspects, operational, teaching and research activities. It further looks at how barriers and drivers affect business schools, individual academics and the role they play in integrating ESD.

The second section answers RQ2 and sheds light on what business schools undertake to support ESD integration by also identifying the perceptions of academic staff towards the support given by their respective school and institution.

Section three sets out to answer RQ3 and highlights how business schools are contributing to learning and development of academic staff with a particular focus on ESD learning and any inherent issues this might create.

The fourth section answers the last research question RQ4 and explores the issues around ESD learning and development, more specifically staff attitude and its effects on an overall integration into business schools. This is concluded with a summary of the chapter.

## 6.2 Business Schools and ESD

**RQ1** What are UK Business Schools doing to integrate ESD into the curriculum, and what roles do individual academics play?

It is claimed that sustainability has been perfectly integrated into business schools (Morand, 2012), a bold assertion that lacks evidence. At first glance, UK business schools and their respective institutions seem to have come a long way to integrate SD within their everyday activities as shown in my case study findings. The case studies researched all show that sustainability is a part of institutions' strategies, policies and operational activities, which trickle down to sub strategies (see section 5.3). The University websites acknowledge sustainability related issues in dedicated sections and display many examples of good practice and SD activities. The inclusion of SD within institutional strategy is however, not a measure of ESD integration and is far more complex to determine and assess the practical implementation, due to underlying and unique differences of each institution.

Some researchers believe that despite continuous conceptual debates, there is now widespread consensus on the importance that HE plays as part of SD (Gough and Scott, 2007; Tilbury, 2011). Morand (2012) in particular claimed that "sustainable concepts are now perfectly and largely integrated within business schools". The view can be supported that there is a widespread consensus, as also seen in my case study findings that show a recognition and inclusion of SD, and ESD to a degree, respectively. However, the findings also show disparities across the case studies discussed throughout the chapter, which lead me to question Morand's claim.

My research findings show an increased awareness of sustainability and areas related within strategy and policy content. Institutions not only acknowledge their impact on the wider environment, but also emphasise their role as a source for good to provide solutions for world problems (see section 5.3). Nevertheless, only one case study prioritised sustainability as one of its main strategic aims by also emphasising the long-term focus of their strategy, whereas it is presented as a secondary or supporting aspect in the other cases (see section 5.3.1). Whether these statements and information provided relate to altruistic, or rather strategic and public relations reasons is unclear. The content on institutions' websites however provides an insight into how HEIs present themselves and the language used. Case B consistently highlights strong values and long-term planning, as well as a continuous use of SD terminology throughout many policies, which suggests a genuine approach to SD and ESD implementation (see section 4.3.3.1). In contrast, the two other case studies put less emphasis on values and long-term planning within

the terminology used. While both cases also highlight environmental and operational sustainability, this does not appear to be at the forefront of their strategies, compared to more economic decisions (see Table 5.5).

Although Universities' acknowledge their impact on the wider environment, growth through internationalisation, was a main, if not most important, strategic aim (see Table 5.5). Growth plans across HEIs are not surprising and can be linked to continuous governmental funding cuts and institutions' search for alternative strategies to generate a consistent income stream, as well as wider impacts of the TEF. Funding is to further drop in light of the potential effects of Brexit on HE, which is also linked to a loss of large financial contributions by the European Union (EU) towards research, as well as other uncertainties related to EU students and staff working in UK HEIs (Mayhew, 2017).

Contrary to the claim of Morand (2012), my research suggests that differences in prioritising the importance of SD across institutions' strategies correlate with those of Tilbury (2011), who highlights that the integration of SD, and in particular into curricula, in HEIs has risen but is patchy at best. It appears that although many business schools and their respective HEIs claim an SD engagement on websites, through strategies and the publicising of good practice and green activities, the reality shows that there is substantial room for improvement. Most of the progress in SD integration has taken place on an environmental and operational level by implementing environmental management systems, recycling, waste and electricity schemes or the promotion of sustainable travel. However, the educational aspect still lags behind with significant differences in course and module content across business curricula (see Table 5.7). These findings go along with those of other researchers who suggest ESD integration to be scattered and mostly focusing on green issues and operations (Leal Filho, 2011; Ngawana, 2009; Tilbury, 2011). Consequently, while change is taking place in business schools, efforts are far from being 'systemic', but rather confined to the usual areas of environmental and operational activities. Systemic change is, however, exactly the approach that is needed to implement ESD across institutions in the long-term (see section 2.5.3).

Teaching paints a very similar picture with considerable differences in modules and programmes of study offered (see section 5.3.3) and the overall approach to include sustainability content. Only one of the case studies offered a mandatory module on SD for all UG business students compared to the other two business schools (see Table 5.7). Thus, ensuring that all undergraduates in the business school will have come across SD and related subjects at some point in their studies. It is not clear how the compulsory module in Case B influences students' ethical and responsible decision making and post-graduation career pathways. A positive aspect

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seems to be the rise in a higher number of SD related dissertations and study projects undertaken by students as pointed out by one interviewee in Case B (see section 4.3.4.2).

Case A follows with some elective modules on SD in some degree programmes and a dedicated programme of study on sustainability. However, student numbers and the success of the programme are still to be determined considering the recent launch. Case C represents the tail end of the three case studies with more generic business programmes and no information that suggests an SD engagement within any module contents. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that there appeared to be a lack of knowledge among interviewees, and in particular, the Dean interviewed, relating to ESD modules across the business school. Overall, my research correlates with that of other academics mentioned in this section.

It was found that two case studies (B and C) had specific research centres, with Case A planning to establish one in the near future. Investing in and developing specialist centres shows a commitment of business schools and Universities to ESD integration. However, Case A and B are more teaching than research focused, hence the output that these centres produce will still have to be determined. This ties in with problems reported by the majority of interviewees of not being able to accommodate research due to existing teaching and administrative responsibilities, in particular at teaching focused institutions that also lack the necessary funding. Furthermore, this brings into question how effective these centres are and how they are used to engage with and drive ESD.

Individuals, both academic and support staff, have varying degrees of knowledge of SD and the many interconnected areas, with some more detailed understanding than others, although the majority focused on and were well versed in their specialist area. Even though there are still many conceptual and definitional debates on sustainability, terminology and the use of SD and ESD did not cause frictions with interviewees. In fact, my research found that interviewees had a greater awareness and understanding of varying and interconnected concepts, and were open to my approach and decision to use ESD as a term in my research. The openness and acceptance of the terminology I used can be due to the thorough research design processes, in which participants were informed through various means and on several occasions of the research, what it entails, interviewees' role and reason for participation and the use of ESD as a concept. As such, I did not experience any objections related to definitional aspects with the interviewees other than an interest to the rational of my decision to use this specific terminology.

Despite a greater awareness of sustainability issues and the acknowledgements of business schools' and Universities' impact on the broader social and natural environment, the case study findings suggest that ESD integration still relies on key academics who are interested in the

subject area and drive this within their schools. These findings correspond with other research that indicates the importance of individual change agents, or enthusiasts who drive the ESD agenda (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Orlitzky and Moon, 2008; Warren and Tweedale, 2002). The reason to interview academics stems from the interest in what roles these key individuals play in ESD integration, how they contribute to the agenda, the support they are given and a reflection of their story, taking into consideration their engagement within their respective business school.

Throughout the interview process it became clear that not all participants were key drivers of ESD and that in fact there were distinctions between these individuals, their level of interest, engagement, and rationale for undertaking their respective role (see section 5.4). Although all interviewees have a connection with and are involved in SD aspects within their schools, through either research, teaching, non-academic support or school leadership, not all displayed a genuine or further interest in the subject area but took part due to various other reasons. Notable examples mentioned include pretending an interest in order to progress in a job interview (see Table 4.10), and the relevance due to accreditation purposes (see section 4.4.5.1). In exploring academics' perception on their role and contribution, one academic suggested a perceived expectation of senior management to pursue SD issues on top of own job responsibilities (see section 4.2.4.3), while another highlighted that there was a presupposed expectation when working at the business school (see section 4.3.4.1).

Variances of SD engagement among interviewees highlight, again, that ESD is primarily driven by academics who show a genuine interest in the subject matter and who pursue the educational integration more extensively. This last point emphasises even more, why it is important to have dedicated staff who drive ESD integration, rather than relying on less enthusiastic individuals who follow their own agenda. However, with ever-increasing job responsibilities, it emerged that engaging individuals beyond their timetabling responsibilities or spurring their interest proved difficult (see sections 4.2.4.3, 4.3.4.4, & 5.4.3). Moreover, even ESD enthusiasts struggled with this task in light of everyday activities.

In order to integrate SD within business education and build momentum, it is vital to inspire and support engagement of more academics than just the enthusiasts. After all any change process needs the followers that drive a successful implementation (Clark, 2004; Lambrechts *et al.*, 2017; Scott, 1999; Senge *et al.*, 2007). While there seems to be a strong top-down support in Case B, A and C show less enthusiasm from senior management (see section 5.5). However, ESD integration requires a combination of both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. So far, this seems inconsistent across the case studies, with only one (see Case B) showing initiatives driven by the VC, Head of School and staff.

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On the surface the three case studies compare similarly in publicising their SD actions, however a more detailed analysis reveals greater differences. While the websites of the Universities all showed various activities with SD and strategic files were readily available, a closer look at the material and interviews highlights noticeable differences in ESD integration in all three institutions as opposed to the website content presented. While all Universities focus greatly on environmental and operational activities, other areas show greater deficiencies.

Business schools tend to have strong links to the business community and a range of organisations locally, nationally and even internationally, so do the cases looked at. Fostering strong links with industry is described by all three business schools as important, so is preparing students with the skills employers are looking for (see section 5.3.1). The connection to business is also reflected in the wealth of academics with a wide range of industry experience, something that brings a unique collection of individuals and business expertise together (see Table 5.3).

Even where a business school is built on an ethos of responsibility and connected to established SD principles (see Case B), yet again a core of enthusiasts emerges alongside others who show a lack of interest and engagement (see section 4.3.4.1). Nevertheless, because the business school is built on the PRME principles, has already committed to core modules on SD, and has dedicated senior management support from the Vice Chancellor and Dean, a foundation has been built that fosters and facilitates research, teaching and learning. Whether, and to what degree, PRME signatories, who also report on ESD integration, use the principles to enforce change within business schools, or use it as a means of window dressing, requires further research.

Definitions and terminology used to describe SD and ESD have been continuously highlighted as a problem to finding an overall accepted and agreed upon meaning of the concepts, while also acting as barriers to putting the concept into practice (Dresner, 2012; Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010; Redclift, 2005; Redclift and Springett, 2015; Tovey, 2009; Waas *et al.*, 2011). Terminology used by business schools differed, such as 'ESD' (Case A) and the more specific 'Responsible Management Education' (Case B) or a mixture of terms and abbreviations (Case C). The use of specific language for two of the case studies (A and B), can be explained through a collaboration with organisations that support certain terminologies such as ESD that is propagated by the HEA, or Responsible Management by the UN Global Compact. Sustainability and SD are used in different contexts including environmental and economic or financial sustainability. It appeared each University adapted the concept and other related terminology to their own institutional case. Terms specific to the business schools were also used by interviewees of cases A and B.

Debates have long focused on the need to have an overall agreed upon definition and exact or precise terminology (Leal-Filho, 2000; Redclift, 2005; Redclift and Springett, 2015; Waas *et al.*,

2011). However, it has also been argued that SD needs to be adapted to each individual institution and their context (Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005; Scott, 1999; Weybrecht, 2017) and one needs to move beyond trying to find a perfect definition but to rather embrace different perceptions and experiment with ESD integration (Dresner, 2012; Kates *et al.*, 2005). Seeing that the business schools and their respective institutions are adapting SD to their own contexts, suggests a step forward in the debate, despite what seems as only an incremental change.

Student engagement across the case studies has shown to be uneven in all business schools and their affiliated Universities in general. All case studies experienced problems with enthusing students, and only one managed to produce more consistent outcomes and collaborations with the Student Union (see section 5.4.2). These findings are in agreement with previous research that shows inconclusive outcomes in terms of student engagement (see Allen *et al.*, 2005; Barber and Venkatachalam, 2013; Lopez *et al.*, 2005), even though there is some suggestion that students' awareness of and interest in sustainability issues has risen, as presented in several NUS studies<sup>54</sup>. While the latter seems true for higher awareness, engagement was reported to be an issue across all case studies with varying degrees of involvement (see section 5.4.2). It is also important to highlight that the NUS studies focused on first and second year undergraduates. Different age and degree groups such as executive MBA students need to be taken into consideration in order to accurately reflect the debate, as SD views can vary greatly between students with and without work and life experience as highlighted by some interviewees (see section 4.3.4.2).

The NUS survey also suggests a lack of understanding of SD as well as a high focus on environmental activities among students. My research found that activities and events within the case studies, focused primarily on green issues such as Green Impact, Green Excellence and others (see section 5.3.2). By mainly focusing on green initiatives and activities it is not surprising that students associate SD predominantly with environmental issues.

### 6.3 ESD Support across Business Schools

**RQ2** How do academics perceive the support given by their school/University to integrate ESD into research and teaching and what is their perception on learning and development?

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<sup>54</sup> For all NUS studies see (Drayson, 2015; Drayson *et al.*, 2012; 2013; Drayson *et al.*, 2014)

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Support included various aspects covering the provision of resources, top-down acknowledgement and engagement with ESD from Deans, VCs and other senior managers, but also cooperation and assistance from colleagues. Interviewees of all case studies showed rather mixed perceptions of the support provided by their business school and University, however, were more positive about peer support (see sections 4.2.5, 4.3.4.5, & 4.4.5).

In general, support among colleagues, and in particular, the ones interested in ESD was described as positive, with some individuals reporting changes in how collaborations have influenced and inspired their research and teaching (see sections 4.2.5.3 & 4.3.5.3). One interviewee in Case A has not only adopted teaching methods used by other departments, but has also established collaborations with other interviewees and initiated and fostered a student led green group (see section 4.2.5.3). Similar work across departments and faculties has been reported by an interviewee in Case C, who is actively building up interdisciplinary research collaborations with other departments and faculties, notably environmental sciences and engineering as part of a newly established SD research centre (see section 4.4.6). Case B, with a more deeply embedded sustainability theme, showed mixed opinions on working with other colleagues (see section 4.2.5.3). It appears there is a perception that academics possess an existing interest in SD as a prerequisite of working at this business school as mentioned above. However, it was also suggested that the latter is not the case and there might only be a core of SD enthusiasts within the business school that are involved in most of the initiatives and activities (see section 4.3.4.1).

Collaborating across disciplines is seen as a crucial aspect in ESD integration considering the concepts' interdisciplinary nature (Lozano *et al.*, 2013). But, it can also increase understanding of SD aspects to make sense of the broader sustainability challenge and how the concept is intrinsically linked to many academic subjects (see sections 4.3.6 & 4.4.6). Ultimately, working across departments, schools and faculties can aid the learning process and support ESD integration from a systemic change perspective, as it makes use of engaging various groups or systems (Senge *et al.*, 2007). My research shows that collaborations across disciplines are happening on a small scale and are far from common. Interdisciplinary work in the schools is either concentrated around specific research centres (see section 4.4.6) or happens individually (see sections 4.2.5.3 & 4.3.4.4), as exemplified in the previous section. Collaborating with colleagues across schools and faculties is desirable in the integration of ESD, however, working with academics in one's own business school can already present issues due to various challenges. Where partnerships happen, it is again ESD enthusiasts, who initiate these collaborations.

One of the greatest factors inhibiting engagement with SD, including collaborations with others, is reported as a lack of resources, such as time and funding (see section 5.4.3). Busy schedules and

increasing workloads present consistent issues for all academics. Specifically the teaching focused cases, showed a shortage of time to engage with research or ESD in general, with learning and teaching as well as administrative responsibilities forming the priority of their role (see sections 5.6.2 & 5.6.3). While Universities have come under increased financial pressure and have undergone a lot of changes (Deem, 2004), it is important to provide academics with the time and resources to engage with ESD. By freeing academics schedules and fostering an academic culture that embraces change, business schools could ensure that not only motivated staff engage with ESD (Hayles and Holdsworth, 2008). Furthermore, this would allow in particular dedicated business academics to focus on ESD integration, and drive engagement within the business schools and institutions as a whole.

Although teaching staff are important in passing on SD knowledge to students, a more systemic approach in engaging additional academics is necessary, to prevent the manifestation of expectations from senior management that existing enthusiasts will do it on top of existing responsibilities (see section 4.2.4.3). Otherwise, it will lead to the same people pushing the agenda forward, or a loss of key staff who are essential to drive ESD integration across business schools as previously also mentioned by Brammer *et al.* (2012). Given the changes in Universities and a lack of security in academic positions and career prospects, it can seem more viable to seek institutions that support ones job aspirations.

Throughout the experience of undertaking the PhD, attending conferences and meeting ESD enthusiasts, it was noteworthy that academics I met along the way opted to change to institutions that were more supportive in promoting SD initiatives and actively committed to sustainability. Among participants of the study, some individuals were also attracted to their business school due to plans to further implement SD and contribute to change on a greater scale (see Ross, Case B and Lily Case C). These latter individuals in particular also appear to be more at risk of leaving their business schools, considering their established careers, expertise, reputation and backing by various important organisations and bodies, which makes them more desirable to competitors in HE. In order for business schools to show that they are seriously walking the talk, attracting but ultimately also fostering and supporting key staff in their ambitions to integrate ESD is of great importance to moving on within the debate.

While strategy and policy documents propagate sustainability, the messages sent through VCs, Deans and other senior management individuals is equally important, however it is also equally inconsistent across two of the three case studies, with only Case B, showing acknowledgement and support for ESD from various organisational leaders and in a consistent manner (see section 5.5). In particular, where Heads of Schools/Deans do not share an enthusiasm or interest to drive

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SD, there appears a perception or lack of interest (see sections 4.4.2 & 5.5) or even a development of conflicts among individual enthusiasts (see section 4.4.5.1). Top-down support is seen as crucial in order to implement ESD in the long-term (Bekessy *et al.*, 2003; Carpenter and Meehan, 2002; Sharp, 2002). Senior management and University leaders are also in favourable positions to drive change and make funds and other resources available and provide support needed (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007). While all three Heads of School/Department know about the importance of SD, although they might not equally share the same interest, they all have to work within certain frameworks that ensure their schools and institutions financial stability and all three equally need greater support from their superiors.

Where my findings encountered a business school built on the ethos of responsible management education and shows support by the Head of School and Vice Chancellor, there still appear to be struggles with resource provision and allocation as well as engagement of academics, other than enthusiasts, and students (see sections 4.3.4). However, the findings in this particular case study also point to a more open and supportive approach as academic staff can still apply for funds if they can make a compelling case (see section 4.3.4.5). Overall, the support provided is scattered across all three business schools, which suggests that ESD integration needs a mixed approach, so the drive and support of academics, senior management, and students alike (Alabaster and Blair, 1996; Lozano, 2006). After all, change, but in particular ESD needs time, even more so a cultural shift within such complex organisations (Hughes, 2006).

It is interesting to note, that some positive responses were elicited by academics who were not only highly motivated and key drivers within their schools, but personally invested in ESD (see section 5.5). Regardless of any difficulties or setbacks, these individuals have continuously contributed to ESD integration in any shape or form, notably the enthusiasts who would invest their own time and funds into their work (see sections 4.2.4.3 & 4.3.4.5). While always committed, a lack of resources such as time, funding and top-down support, could lead to demotivation and risk losing these key individuals to other institutions (Brammer *et al.*, 2012).

The research interviews also exposed another demographic of academics that seem to fall under the radar, with an interest in the broader agenda or related principles, but no active commitment to ESD integration (see sections 4.2.4.1 & 4.3.4.1). In addition, interviewees showed variable differences in their SD interest, with some academics having a considerably higher engagement than others, and not everyone who would be perceived as enthusiasts or change agents *per se*, but have enough of an interest to have been given responsibility on sustainability activities within their school or department. It was also mentioned in several interviews that for example the content of SD across the University is higher than expected (see section 4.2.4.1), which assumes

that there are more academics who have an interest in SD related subjects but who are not perceived or known as SD enthusiasts. In a similar vein, an interviewee exemplified this point by highlighting a colleague who has undertaken teaching in a sustainability related subject, however does not openly confer to or engage with the ESD enthusiasts within the business school. Hence, pointing to the potential of a greater number of sustainability supporters in HEIs that are supportive of the debate, albeit in a more passive way or who might not share the same enthusiasm about the concept in itself, however are actively engaged in other forms.

## 6.4 ESD Learning and Development

**RQ3** How are UK Business Schools contributing to ESD learning and development of academic staff?

In order to answer research question three it is important to consider several factors. Firstly, learning and development has evolved differently across HEIs in the UK, in particular for traditional Universities as opposed to new ones, redbrick or previous polytechnics, something that has developed differently over the years in each institution, with many changes in HE that have taken place (Clegg, 2003b). Secondly, differences and unique contexts of institutions have not only impacted how learning and development has progressed, but different concepts, meanings and understandings of the terminology have surfaced (Bell *et al.*, 2009; Wilkinson, 1998). Thirdly, learning and development of academics has taken, and still is mostly taking, place through informal or non-formal means (Becher, 1999; Clegg, 2003b; Knight, 2002).

The case study participants interviewed, predominantly learn through traditional ways such as reading, writing, publishing, collaborating with other academics in the field, as well as attending conferences and other events (see ), which might include instances of social learning. The business schools in my research and their institutions offer a broad selection of formal learning and development opportunities for staff members, whether academic or support staff. These formal provisions are offered at an organisational level within the business schools researched. However, the options provided are mostly generic in nature. Where applicable to academics, academic development in form of workshops and seminars focus on aspects of grant and bid applications, writing and publishing and CV writing and others (see section 5.6). Professional development and the provision of formal training at case studies A, B and C are therefore very much dependent on each institution (Clegg, 2003b), which is even more the case for academic development opportunities.

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ESD learning and development provisions are not new and various Universities in the UK and abroad are offering training courses to academics (see UBC, 2014; University of Gloucestershire, 2014), a prominent example is the University of Gloucestershire. However, these are single cases and not much is known about institutional ESD learning and development and its effectiveness across business schools and Universities as a whole.

It is important to remember that most learning for academic staff takes place through informal channels rather than through formal training (see section 5.6.1). Informal learning is less organised and tends to take place across a field or area of expertise and is not necessarily confined to an institution. In this respect, social learning as discussed in the literature review might take place with groups and organisations, but outside of one's own University. One might assume that sustainability as an abstract and multi-faceted concept, would gain an equal foothold in training and development of staff. However, the contrary seems to be the case.

Only one case study (see Case A) offers a training programme that aims to support academics who are interested in integrating SD into their teaching, incorporated into the staff development programme and offered through the HR department. The training programme was developed and is led by one of the interviewees, who is also one of the main drivers of SD within the business school and the University as a whole. Albeit the push of this key academic the training programme lacks attendees, potentially due to individuals' busy schedules (see section 5.6.2). In addition, a training programme on sustainable procurement is offered that all staff and students can attend. The latter is the only sustainability learning provision that resembles social learning and brings individuals and groups from across the whole institution together. ESD learning is also complemented through the provision of a research depository on teaching material through a Moodle page on the University intranet, which is set up and managed by the same key individual mentioned above.

From an organisational and even school level, none of the case studies researched has actively supported the implementation of learning and development opportunities or promotes these, but have rather left this development to academics themselves (see section 5.6.2). It, again, comes down to individuals or enthusiasts to drive any ESD initiatives, as seen in the training programme offered at Case A, that might not have been offered, if it was not for one key individual. Nevertheless, all three business schools provide academics with the freedom to engage with research and teaching that individuals are interested in and want to pursue, as such academics can engage with SD. Moreover, this refers to attending conferences and events. However, if it falls outside of their area of work, any activities will be in addition to academics' already busy schedules, which also depend on time and funding (see 5.4.3).

My research findings suggests that HEIs contribute to ESD learning and development in a passive manner. Since ESD relates to academic involvement and academics learn differently, it is not only left to individuals to widen their knowledge, but business schools and institutions in general do not meddle with the idea of more formal ESD development, which could be perceived as going against academic freedom by inhibiting academics' work to pursue scholarship freely (see section 5.6.2). Hence, academics are left to their own devices to engage with SD even where there is a promotion of sustainability across business education. Social learning opportunities might therefore arise, but are likely to occur externally through bodies and organisations in one's own area of expertise. Only one interviewee suggested a more compulsory approach to ESD by suggesting to tie financial and other funding to individual's research (see section 4.4.6), with the majority showing some interest but are reluctant to a more stringent approach (see section 5.6.2).

While there is strategic and operational support for SD purposes, it does not translate to concrete actions to foster academics' learning. The only learning and development opportunity offered and any other presentations and events organised at business schools, link to key enthusiasts within each school. I therefore agree with Roberts and Roberts (2008) who suggest that staff development to further ESD in HE is not or not fully taken into consideration, with individual academics as a driving force.

If we take into consideration that learning and development in itself is relatively fragmented across HE, the differences between Universities and the fact that academics learn and develop differently, it is not surprising that professional development in ESD lags behind. A further important point in this debate is academic freedom, which will be looked at more closely in the next section.

## 6.5 Academic Role and ESD Engagement

**RQ4** What hinders the provision of formal ESD learning and development opportunities and how does this impact ESD integration?

It emerged that interviewees' learning takes place mostly through traditional informal and formal means, including reading, writing and publishing, attending conferences as well as collaborations (see Table 5.8). Much of the learning involves other colleagues and experts in the field (see section 5.6.1). However, this learning pre-dominantly takes place within the boundaries of sustainability enthusiasts and interested academics and other experts (see section 5.6.2). While

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open to other academics who are new to the field, there is a lack of engagement from other academics with no ESD interest from within or outside of the business schools (see section 5.4.1). In other words, engaging other academics aside from ESD enthusiasts is proving difficult even where events and presentations are organised.

Social learning has been described as a way forward to integrating SD within HEIs (Hegarty *et al.*, 2011; Kates *et al.*, 2001), and includes the collaboration across disciplines and involvement of all players in an organisation. And although the above can be seen as a form of social learning, its confinement to individuals interested in sustainability, in essence, could be a reason that hinders the process of social learning and the use of systemic change, which require the inclusion of different stakeholders and parties that are effected by and connected to the change taking place (Senge *et al.*, 2007; Wals, 2007).

While formal learning and development is seen as a positive aspect in ESD integration, the specifics lead to disagreements among the participants interviewed (see section 5.6.2). The majority of interviewees are critical about institutional provision of ESD learning and development, specifically when referred to compulsory training (see sections 5.6.2, 4.2.6.1, 4.3.6.1, & 4.4.6.1). Various interviewees emphasised that academics could not be forced or coerced to take part in formal development opportunities, whether institutional or through any other organisational body as this goes against the notion of academic freedom (see section 4.2.6.1). Specifically, where academics have been taught outdated business theories and principles, a reluctance or suspicion towards the ESD agenda was described (see section 4.4.6.1).

The lack to drive any ESD learning and development for academics could be due to traditional perceptions of how academics learn and the academic freedom connected to careers in HE (Clegg, 2003b). However, it could also be due to differences in commitment to academics' area of expertise versus the institution they are employed at (Crawford, 2009). Crawford's argument is important in the ESD debate and should be taken into consideration and widened. It is crucial to understand the academic role and learning in the ESD integration debate, which can be helpful in any major change process in academia. My research agrees with literature (Clegg, 2003b; Crawford, 2009) that academics' learning and development differs and individuals might show greater loyalty to their subject area than their University. In this respect, putting ESD into practice could complicate matters if these relational aspects are not understood. Neglecting this aspect, I believe, creates a paradox of expectations towards ESD enthusiasts without understanding the relationship to their institution, which ultimately influences the change process. It is also worth noting that academic freedom has already been restricted over the last decades through the many changes in HE as mentioned by Martin-Sardesai *et al.* (2017).

Furthermore, it was suggested that academic learning takes place best in ‘learning societies’, often associated with experts and specialist bodies in the field, rather than institutional development programmes that might prove too constricting (see section 4.3.6). While this is a valid point, I believe that it is important to reconsider the complexity of HEIs and the concept of SD and ESD respectively, and how best to integrate these concepts into Universities. It has been pointed out that Universities have to put ESD into their own institutional contexts in order to make sense of and tackle any kind of integration (Weybrecht, 2017), which is the case for any change management process that is taking place. Enthusiasts in one case study (see Case A) are already attempting to institutionalise ESD learning and development, however with little success considering the lack of support provided from senior management and leaders within the University and existing responsibilities (see section 4.2.5). Most interviewees across all three case studies perceived ESD learning and development as something of an alien concept to their academic work, in particular with respect to an institutional approach. The overall reaction by interviewees is best encapsulated by an interviewee who said that “I’m not sure what they [the University] could offer that we are not capable of going out and getting ourselves to be honest with you” (Rachel, Case B). The statement does not only reflect the perceptions well but, I believe, also reveals an attitude that academics are responsible for their own learning and development within expert groups and organisations

When approaching ESD from a change process and in particular systemic change, it is clear that integration of the process needs to take place within an institutional context. As such where would be the best place to collectively learn, form an understanding, a shared vision, and trial and error new and emerging ways of ESD integration other than the organisation that attempts to integrate it? So far this learning experience and the creation of social learning within business schools appears to be inhibited, not only by support provided by institutions and leaders of HEIs but also, by academics’ own perception of learning, where it takes place and who is involved in it. By leaving learning to learning societies as suggested earlier by one interviewee, ESD integration is inevitably left again up to enthusiasts who engage with these societies in which predominantly like-minded individuals come together instead of moving this aspect of social learning into a learning organisation. As one interviewee suggested educational integration of ESD requires an individual expert or department that works towards creating the institutional building blocks that foster social learning within an organisation (see section 4.4.6.1). While some individuals have already integrated and build the business school in Case B on a set of SD principles, here too appear the same issues to further engage academics with sustainability or enthuse individuals for further and continuous integration and behavioural change.

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Only four academics were open to the training suggestion, with one interviewee proposing a radical change to push academics towards undertaking ESD learning, by emphasising the importance to ‘train the trainer’ (see section 4.4.6.1, ), terminology previously used by advocates of learning and development in ESD (Lozano-García *et al.*, 2008). A suggestion to increase engagement notably is the reinforced use of incentives and rewards, and tying these to funding and additional rewards offered by business schools and equally other schools and faculties (see section 4.4.6.1). Although incentives and rewards have been suggested as a way to contribute and increase SD integration (Müller-Christ *et al.*, 2013; Smith, 2004), questions arise as to whether this is an effective means or rather pushes academics to reluctantly engage with the ESD agenda in order to access similar or benefit from additional rewards like ESD enthusiasts (see section 4.2.6.1). It could, as noted by one interviewee, lead to the loss of academics that are not contributing to SD or are even inhibiting progress, but that are useful to lose (see section 4.4.6.1). However, this view is counterproductive to the notion of systemic change and social learning that embraces bringing different views and parties to the table to develop a common strategy, build relationships and puts systemic change into practice (Senge *et al.*, 2007; Wals, 2007). Even where such an idea gains ground and support from enthusiasts and institutional leaders is available, it risks building a microcosm of SD supporters, by diverting or displacing non-enthusiasts. The above was not supported across any case study looked at, as interviewees referred to the same groups of individuals involved in SD (see sections 4.2.3.1, 4.3.4.1). While one individual pointed out some scepticism towards academics who are too pushy in convening their enthusiasm in SD (see section 4.3.4.1), not much is known about individuals who might be interested in SD but pursue their own interests and agendas without associating with ESD enthusiasts, hence falling under the radar within their business school and University.

Business schools comprise a notable number of academics from a wide variety of areas of study and expertise, who have often worked in different business areas and industries (see Table 5.3) and whose SD interests have developed differently with disparities in experience and industry, which taint collaborations among academics (see section 5.2.2). Although the majority of interviewees in my research had a genuine interest in sustainability, several participants had been thrown into SD responsibility positions, with some interests developing further than others, and the participants not necessarily being associated as enthusiasts, or change agents (see section 5.2.3). This begs the question how collaborations take place between these individuals considering different priorities and interests?

It also emerged that academics might show an interest in sustainability issues, but do not necessarily agree with the ESD agenda or engage with it (see sections 5.2.3 & 5.4.1). This suggests a greater support of the notion of SD by individuals, than previously assumed. Similarly, it begs

the question about the inclusion of enthusiasts who are disillusioned about the lack of support and acknowledgement (see section 4.3.4.3). As pointed out disparities of engagement could also be connected to issues that go beyond ESD integration, and lead back to an academic culture of reclusion and work in isolation, the lack of interest to work with others or perceived lack of interest of others, or the pursuit of one's own research and career interests (see section 4.3.4.1).

A lack of engagement or interest can be down to various factors (see Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Dahle and Neumayer, 2001; Fien, 2002) that inhibit academic engagement and can be connected with the changing role of academics and the additional pressures put on individuals (Barnett, 2003; Clegg, 2003b; Crawford, 2009). Connecting the engagement issue to wider aspects of changes in the academic role, also points towards more widespread issues of change within HEIs and the changing role and expectations connected to it.

Business schools' contributions to ESD learning and development can be described as passive, with key elements of learning left to traditional ways of developing academics skills. Considering the changes in HE over the past few decades and the differences in professional development, with academic learning still taking place outside of individuals' own institutions and rather through subject specific organisations or bodies, it is not surprising to see a reluctance towards more institutional measures of ESD learning. Although some interviewees might be more open to a more formal and compulsory approach, the majority of academics spoken to are weary of, and reluctant to push ESD learning and development that might risk academic freedom.

## 6.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research findings from multiple case studies analysed and has answered the research questions outlined. It has identified the contribution of three UK business schools, with findings confirming outcomes in the field, which suggest that there is still a strong focus pre-dominantly on environmental and operational SD integration and a lack on the educational component. Furthermore, it was found that ESD enthusiasts are still at the forefront of driving sustainability initiatives, something that needs to be addressed in order to engage a wider area of stakeholders within Universities as both a top-down as well as bottom-up approach is needed in order to implement ESD from a systemic change perspective (Bekessy *et al.*, 2007).

Differences between HEIs to integrate ESD are not surprising considering multiple factors, not least the unique set-up and history of each institution looked at, but also University size, financial measures, as well as areas of study and specialisation (see sections 5.2, & 5.2.2). Furthermore, my

findings correlate with existing research that points to the complexities in Universities (Alabaster and Blair, 1996; Lozano García *et al.*, 2006; Morand, 2012; Weber and Hirsch, 2002), which therefore suggest that systemic change is needed that takes complexities but also different systems or parts of Universities into consideration in order to integrate ESD. Equally the why, how and what of integrating ESD is important for HEIs, in order to break down barriers or avoid barriers from being put up (Ryan, 2012).

Support provided by business schools has been identified as rather passive. The most notable outcomes show positive experiences and collaborations among colleagues, with the same or similar interests. Where senior management and leadership were positive about sustainability issues and acknowledgement and communication of the message was more consistent, a better backdrop to ESD integration was built, compared to institutions that seemed to lack top-down engagement. The biggest issue in terms of support related to funding to engage with initiatives and activities, time due to overloaded schedules and the allocation and provision of academics to teach key SD modules.

Learning and development takes place through HR departments with generic offers and academic development or annual appraisal focusing more on academics' work within the relevant department. Even where a business school offers ESD learning and development for academics, the uptake is low. Nevertheless, professional development very much depends on each institution and business school, considering the concept has developed differently across Universities (Wilkinson, 1998). In addition, academics still learn through mostly informal and some formal channels. An institutional approach to learning and development, in particular mandatory training, is mostly perceived as an intrusion into academics' roles, and met with resistance by academics due the fear of meddling with individuals academic freedom.

## Chapter 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Originality of Research and Contribution to Knowledge

Research on sustainability and SD has grown over the past few decades, but there is still a lack of attention on systemic change and academics' learning and development as a vehicle to support the long-term process of ESD integration. The thesis findings contribute to existing, but also future research on ESD integration and systemic change, social learning, the role of academics and their learning and development.

#### 7.1.1 ESD and Systemic Change

Systemic change requires looking at different views, sharing ideas and building relationships and a common goal. However, the case study results show that there are ongoing barriers to move ESD into the main strategic framework of business schools. Case study finding show that SD relates to greening operations of HEIs rather than curricular activities. Even where SD and responsibility make up the core of strategies and policies like Case B, the process is largely driven by individual enthusiasts and groups in each business school. Although HE is undergoing continuous transformations, there are inherent issues in resisting change.

Flexibility and adaption, as a systemic change process, to integrate ESD in such a resistant environment therefore seems paradoxical, and exacerbates barriers that enthusiasts are facing. Taking the polar opposites of resistance versus continuous change into consideration, ESD integration is bound to be a long, painful and messy process that requires working through these challenges. In addition, ESD enthusiasts and groups need a greater focus, as they cannot be the only ones driving the agenda. The study demonstrates this by highlighting the continuous work undertaken by enthusiasts and lack of institutional support provided, whether through funding or the provision of dedicated time. Thus, leading to demotivation and possibly loss of enthusiasts who are key contributors in this change process. The implications of losing key staff are serious and particularly concerning where interviewees see their role as a stopover rather than a long-term engagement, given the difficulties faced. These individuals need to be involved as they are crucial in a systemic change process that requires adapting, shifting and continuous learning within complex HEIs.

ESD is mostly dependant on enthusiasts in business schools, who often engage with SD on top of existing responsibilities. According to several interviewees from all case studies, there is an expectation for enthusiasts to contribute to ESD integration on top of their workload. Some research (see Solitander *et al.*, 2012) emphasises that enthusiasts have to work within the means available and become more creative in their efforts. My findings suggest that this line of thought is less likely to yield ongoing and lasting successes without more fundamental support and commitment, as ESD engagement requires a lot of energy and persistence for those involved. Academic roles and expectations have become more demanding, which leads me to question how enthusiasts without appropriate support measures, can be expected to carry the responsibility of furthering ESD. If ESD is an institutional priority, academics' commitment requires support, rather than impediments through additional responsibilities.

The findings strengthen the premise that business schools and HEIs in general have to show a higher commitment in supporting individual academic enthusiasts or groups, whether through higher financial contributions, the relief of existing responsibilities and time to focus on being able to contribute more effectively. A lack of support might otherwise lead to a stagnation of ESD integration or even failure to realise more sustainable business curricula.

### **7.1.2 Social Learning**

Social learning is seen as way to contribute to continuous learning and development of individuals in systemic change but also change processes in general (Wals *et al.*, 2009; Wenger, 2000), including academic and support staff. Social learning is the best way for HEIs to tackle sustainability across institutions as it adds value by including different stakeholders in the learning process. In that respect both concepts, systemic change and social learning, share the same underlying premise of collaboration and shared learning. Although both concepts are hailed as ideal solutions, their practical approach is far from easy and requires dedication, senior management support and an engagement of individuals and groups across the board. Engagement also includes the willingness to take a risk, leave ones one comfort zone and work with academics and support staff from across, and beyond, business school boundaries.

Collaborations, in particular with other departments or faculties, are not necessarily common. My research highlights that where collaborations developed, they had a profound impact on individuals, especially in increasing motivation, new ways of thinking, and inspiring colleagues. Nevertheless, collaborations were often hampered by daily constraints of individuals' roles, responsibilities, resources and different campus locations that inhibited travel. Issues of

collaboration are particularly problematic in teaching rather than research focused institutions, highlighting the importance of income gained through tuition fees and the focus on teaching, tutoring and administrative activities, hence leaving less time for research and other academic engagement. Given that social learning requires dedication and engagement across departments, time and managerial support are of essence in order to not only take-part in learning opportunities, but also achieve any lasting results.

### **7.1.3 Academics' Learning and Development**

Learning is crucial in the ESD debate and will be the defining factor for organisations' to differentiate themselves from other institutions. Taking into account continuous political and socio economic shifts, and rapid changes in technology, HE as a place of learning needs to be able to keep pace with ESD, competitors and other organisations, which highlights the importance of social learning and systemic change. However, although HEIs pass knowledge on to students and potential future business leaders, learning and development of academics shows differences to other professions in as far as learning takes place through more informal channels such as research, publications, conferences and collaborations with other experts in their field.

The idea of establishing institutional ESD learning and development were generally perceived as positive, however questioned by some in terms of their relevance. This includes the perception that these development opportunities are not an institution's responsibility and should be acquired within the field and area of expertise. However, engaging with learning opportunities across one's own institution can strengthen the institutional case of ESD, by bringing individuals from different academic fields and departments together, and actively participating in and driving ESD within the business school and across the whole University. Thus, strengthening the idea of social learning and bringing different groups and individuals together.

On the contrary, the notion of establishing formal or even mandatory opportunities to foster ESD learning were mostly received with scepticism by case study participants. Nearly all interviewees were concerned about a potentially hidden agenda of their institution and the interference with academic freedom. The findings also suggest a concern of individuals to lose autonomy of their own learning that tends to be driven by academics themselves, their area of expertise and loyalty to the field rather than their own institution. However, given the importance of SD and socio-economic issues, one might argue that academic development needs to evolve by not only including learning that is relevant to solving wider global problems, but also tackling issues in academics' own institutions. This could be done by linking formal learning opportunities to

funding and reward, and incentivise participation in order to increase ESD engagement across business schools.

#### **7.1.4 Academic Role and Freedom**

My findings show that opinions on formal ESD learning differ among academics. However, ESD learning is more likely to achieve acceptance as long as institutions do not dictate it, with a preference to offer voluntary learning and development opportunities. The critical perception resonated with support staff interviewed, who emphasised that academics should not be forced or coerced to part-take given the sensitive issue of academic freedom and tension that could arise. Moreover, it could also lead to a tick-box exercise rather than genuine engagement; even though everyone agreed, a voluntary approach might not achieve a higher engagement with SD.

The likelihood of organisational interference and perceived worries by academics, while strongly holding on to the right of academic freedom, is however a false notion of security. With the marketisation of HE, Universities run like businesses, as well as increasing workloads and uncertain career prospects, one can argue that academics have already been implicated and lost some of that academic freedom. This raises the question of how academic freedom and the more business-focused approach propagated by HEIs can harmonise to guarantee funding and state-of-the-art learning and teaching, while ensuring the freedom of academics to pursue scholarship in their area of interest without forcing ESD integration such as through nudging? Further research is needed to look into how these pressures can be brought in line to work with an already complex process of ESD integration, the lack of support and emotionally consuming work undertaken by enthusiasts to keep the agenda going. Clearly, the changing nature of the academic role and marketisation of HE do not support ESD integration, but rather complicate it by requiring even more resilient academics who can cope with unrealistic job expectations, while attempting to save the world.

## **7.2 Limitations to the Study**

ESD research and the use of case studies, has been criticised for lacking a theoretical underpinning of research methods chosen, as well as including and framing of previous research undertaken (Corcoran *et al.*, 2004; Fien, 2002). The theoretical underpinning in my thesis is guided by change management theory as a sustainable way to integrate ESD into HEIs.

Additionally, social learning theory is emphasised as an aspect of systemic change that can aid and support academics' learning and development within professional development to foster ESD understanding and engagement, and ultimately pushes a systemic integration within business schools. The theoretical grounding underpins and supports the research undertaken by providing a framework and direction for further research.

Criticism on case study research, also centre on the limitation of a smaller sample and its generalisation. While the sample size was small, and consisted of three cases and 16 interviews, the case studies were undertaken on the grounds of replication, rather than generalisation, given that no HE context is the same and can be directly compared. The intention was to identify similarities and differences in these vastly different University settings. The in-depth nature of the case studies therefore, provide more robust measures and findings in relation to individual perceptions and experiences that facilitate understanding of individuals as barriers to ESD integration within their own institutional context. Although a higher number of interviewees could have helped to gain a deeper understanding of each business school and institutional framework, a larger sample size was not viable in line with the detailed nature of the study and the outlined research questions.

The participants of each case study were involved in sustainability teaching, research or other related activities within their business school and University. A more diverse range of interviewees such as participants with no interest in, or critics of, SD could have provided more insights into other perspectives within the business schools, related to ESD integration. Although one might assume that the case study participants are all interested and positively favour sustainability themes due to their work involvement, this thinking suggests that SD enthusiasts are a homogenous group. This is far from the case, specifically in business studies with a range of industry backgrounds and business connections. Individuals' professional backgrounds did not only vary greatly, but influencing factors that contributed to their SD interest differed too.

The qualitative nature of the study requires building rapport with participants however, this can also present an issue of researcher bias. An introduction and overview to the study was provided prior to, and at the time of, the interview to clarify any queries. Questions were addressed during and after the interview process in order to avoid any misunderstandings and clarify ambiguities. Furthermore, participants had the opportunity to review the transcribed interviews and address any issues. While these measures can reduce bias, they cannot fully eliminate researcher bias, considering the very nature of qualitative research.

Face-to-face interviews were undertaken with both A and B, and where not suitable or possible, as with Case C, Skype interviews were arranged. Skype proved useful in avoiding travelling a great

distance to conduct the interviews, hence saving a considerable amount of time and funds for both interviewees and myself. The downsides were bad internet connections that put a strain on conversations, interruption of the conversation flow and the risk of losing already valuable time. Although the use of electronic means to conduct interviews, meetings and other gatherings has become commonplace, meeting interviewees in person, and building rapport can add value to the interview process and stories shared as opposed to a less personal conversation through Skype. On the contrary, physical distance can provide some space and control over the interview environment. While I tried to undertake the interviews in person, individuals themselves suggested Skype as an option to save time, money, and avoid unnecessary travel to keep carbon footprint at a minimum.

The research findings only present a snapshot of the larger picture of ESD integration and the perception on learning and development in three UK business schools, at a given time. As such, it is not clear if ESD integration has further evolved across the three case studies since completion of the data collection. It is unclear if the interviews have potentially had a stimulating impact on individual participants and their ESD engagement. It is speculative at this point to make any assumption. However, further research can advance on the findings, identify any changes and possibly widen the scope of individuals involved.

### **7.3 Summary and Recommendations**

My empirical research suggests that there are still disparate opinions and divisions on how best to integrate ESD within business schools. Evidence for a slow change is seen in the fact that only one of three schools looked at offered specific SD modules throughout all courses and was driven by a sustainability ethos (see section 5.3.3). The remaining two business schools (A and C) show some interest but do not appear to be willing to change the overall nature of their business and management content.

Integration and support generally vary, even in more exemplary cases that are driven by longstanding values to contribute to the greater good (see Case B). On the surface, the activities undertaken appear outstanding and forward thinking, while underneath the same group of enthusiasts drive or are expected to drive the change. Learning of academics in particular is perceived differently across the cases, with a general hesitation to consider new ways of learning, including more formal or even compulsory learning and development.

All participants, except one, showed great concern about institutional interventions, and exhibited a fear of losing academic freedom. The predominant number of interviewees favoured using learning societies, and research groups within their field, rather than offering institutional development opportunities (see sections, 5.6 & 4.3.6). However, by neglecting new ways to learn and establish a greater connection with one's own institution, I wonder how ESD integration is going to progress at the business schools and HEIs analysed in my research. Change is inevitable and its pace is increasing in our globalised world, hence requiring each and every one of us to innovate. The above, does not only apply to academics, but also support staff and senior management. ESD requires the ongoing support from business schools, University leaders and senior management, but as seen in the case studies, efforts vary even within schools (see section 5.4).

A culture that embraces change and values input and collaboration needs to be fostered, in order to work with different agendas and interests that hinder ESD integration, from individual interests in other research areas or those that provide the best career trajectories, to the strategic importance that is placed on SD within departments and schools. Hence, requiring business school leaders to ask themselves the question how genuine their efforts are in furthering SD and what priority it has. ESD can only be successfully and truly be integrated when leaders start redefining what their business school stands for, determining its future goals and the priority SD plays. Otherwise, ESD engagement will continue with a business as usual attitude and merely focusing on operational aspects.

While SD policies are in place in all institutions researched, their implementation require strengthening and have to be put at the forefront of business schools' strategies, in particular in curricular work. Incorporating sustainability, responsible management, business ethics, and other concepts into modules and courses is a first step in firmly establishing a commitment to ESD. However, efforts need to go further as exemplified in one case where the overall support of various senior leaders and management was in place (see section 5.4). Nevertheless, even here disparities in engagement and interest are common, ultimately leaving further development of ESD to enthusiasts.

While student recruitment and financial viability is important for HEIs, business school leaders need to ask themselves how ESD integration can continue and progress in an environment that pushes the boundaries of academics, expected to take on more responsibilities, while also engaging with sustainability matters. Clearly, this goes beyond the formulation of institutional policies and strategies that support the notion of sustainability, but rather rethinking the purpose of business education. Given that business schools are the 'cash cows' in Universities, influencing a large number of students and future business leaders, they undoubtedly have a responsibility to

pursue SD more rigorously but also aim to drive its integration more genuinely. Dedicating financial resources to creating a formal role, or better yet a team, that is committed to ESD integration and collaborations with other departments and schools is the first step in achieving further integration and embedding institutional strategies and policies. Furthermore, the social learning theme could be incorporated, by taking on the form of cross-departmental working groups, dedicated to achieving ESD integration.

Overall, the cases have similar, if not the same, issue in engaging staff and students, and ultimately pushing ESD to the forefront of the business school and University agenda, other than environmental and operational solutions. In order to go beyond the latter, the systemic change process of ESD integration needs to be put into the context of a continuously shifting HE sector, and more importantly the role of academics and their growing responsibilities and work. Therefore, financial contributions and dedicated ESD positions, as well as arrangements to making time available for lecturers engaging with, and contributing to, ESD are necessary. In the long-term, this will take the pressure off enthusiasts and allows for a steady progression in implementing ESD more widely. In contrast, neglecting the needs of, and providing time and funding to enthusiasts can lead to the loss of these individuals who are key to ESD integration.

Learning as a crucial part of systemic change requires academics themselves, including ESD enthusiasts, to rethink learning and development and its advantages to driving sustainability within business schools. This refers particularly to the engagement with individuals and groups from other disciplines that facilitates learning, and provides a more hands-on approach to integrating ESD by directly involving with others and learning from each other. After all, in order to develop the institutional case for ESD, academics have to be a part of it, and that also requires being open to other ways of learning. Hence, increasing inter-, cross- and transdisciplinary collaboration, supported by the notion of social learning, should be fostered in order to jointly tackle sustainability in business issues. This can be achieved by, promoting institutional collaborations, and building a platform for academics to address and work on tackling institutional but also local and global issues together. Some of these measures are however, again dependent on freeing academics from overloaded schedules, providing sabbaticals and contributing to collaborations through incentives and rewards. One such way to work with time constraints could be the creation of more interdisciplinary PhD programmes to increase collaborations.

Learning and development of academics in this context has developed differently across Universities, and distinguishes itself from other professional learning opportunities outside of HE, with non-formal learning representing a large part of academics' own development. Given that learning is the common denominator in any professional development, it is astonishing that

academics' learning is often perceived differently from that of other professions. Therefore, it is important to look into how learning and development connects with the academic role and how it can be further promoted and supported. SD enthusiasts need to not only be provided with resources such as time and money to contribute to the agenda and further its integration. By freeing them from overloaded schedules and making the case for ESD, it could be easier to initiate additional engagement and enthuse others within business schools to part-take in social learning opportunities across the whole institution. Similarly, providing support by not only acknowledging enthusiasts' work, but also increasing funding, time or dedicating specific sustainability roles to individuals or groups, can avoid isolation, exhaustion and loss of motivation and prevents institutions from losing key enthusiasts who are important in driving ESD integration.

The case studies have shown that a systemic change process is dependent on each individual organisation. All cases are inherently different in size, region, background, history, funding, culture, area of specialism and many other factors. Funding in particular has a bigger impact as it allows investment into sustainability and ESD projects respectively. However, not every business school will be able to sustain high funding. In particular, the teaching-focused business schools at smaller Universities struggled in my research to fund projects and more high profile conferences and events, even though one case showed exemplary engagement. The biggest business school and institution among the case studies has not only a higher number of students but also a wider offer of courses that might encourage engagement with sustainability issues (e.g. engineering). In addition, it rakes in a higher amount of research funding, giving it the advantage to focus on and pursue a wider engagement with ESD.

Balancing the ongoing changes of marketisation of HE that have inherently changed academic roles and added to higher workloads and pressures, while raising awareness and contributing to an already complex process of ESD integration, calls for greater individual and organisational involvement. Although learning and development is seen as a way of driving ESD, academics cannot singlehandedly be expected to expose themselves to an often arduous process that demands such an intensive and often emotional work of furthering the ESD agenda. Further research into bridging the complexities of ESD integration and the ever changing HE sector are therefore required, in order to support individuals in their endeavour to driving SD, and explore how best social learning can be used within the development of all staff and can contribute to this process.

Undoubtedly, achieving the above is a complex undertaking and requires further research to build on the findings of my thesis. I believe universities have to become more resilient in order to continue working towards a systemic integration of ESD. The question is how systemic change

## Chapter 7

processes can be strengthened in order to ensure that institutions are more resilient by adequately dealing with challenges such as a lack of funding, the uncertainties of events like Brexit and unstable student numbers, while continuing on a sustainable path. As mentioned above, dealing with SD and systemic change requires flexibility and adaption, which represents a paradox given HEIs' resistance to change. Hence, further research needs to explore how universities can cope with this paradox without compromising on a long-term ESD integration. Moreover, what support mechanisms can be employed to strengthen the position of ESD enthusiasts, while motivating and engaging other academics and support staff?

Another avenue for future research is a greater focus on social learning in academia. The pace of change in the world is not slowing down and is likely to exacerbate the impacts, global issues will have on HE. Therefore, the institutional and individual ability to adapt to change and learn more quickly is crucial. Learning represents the backbone of any change or development, but despite the close connection of systemic change and social learning, the links of both concepts to SD have hardly been explored by research so far (Siebenhüner and Arnold, 2007). As reflected in the thesis findings, collaborations, where they happen, can have a positive impact on individuals' motivation and learning. Given the lack of research on the common denominators of learning, SD and change, future research can explore what universities can do to increase social learning in ESD integration and how individuals can be engaged. However, this assumes adequate conditions (Reed *et al.*, 2010), which requires an overall better understanding of social learning, how it links to HE and an appropriate definition relevant for this context. Deepening our understanding of this theoretical construct can help identify how social learning can be effectively used in HEIs to engage staff across different disciplines and departments, whilst integrating ESD and continuously tackle issues that are arising.

Future research can build on findings from this study in various ways:

- Widen the focus to other business schools, in order to broaden understanding of ESD learning and development in other institutional contexts that are different from the case studies already explored. This is useful because it provides a more comprehensive picture of ESD and learning and development across the HE sector in varying institutional contexts, which could identify other examples of best practice and facilitate ESD in other HEIs.
- Expand the participant base at each business school to gain a more in-depth picture of each institutional case study. This could comprise a more diverse participant base, including individuals who are not interested in SD, individuals who are unfamiliar with, or lack knowledge of, the concept and other senior managers/leaders.

- Follow-up study on the business schools researched here, to evaluate their progression towards achieving ESD integration. This could include evaluating if enthusiasts are still the main driving forces within the business schools. Moreover, have any new strategies such as setting up a new research centre (as seen in Case A) had an impact on ESD integration? Exploring changes can help evaluate business schools and Universities ESD progression and identify if, and how, they are moving towards a further integration of the concept. One downside to a follow-up study is that interviewees, who initially participated in this research, might have moved to other institutions.
- Explore how social learning can be implemented in HEIs to support systemic change with an action research approach. This could be assessed by bringing actors from different parts of an institution together to explore how social learning can be utilised across an institution to drive ESD integration.

Both systemic change and social learning require an understanding of learning in HE. I believe it is imperative to understand how academics learn, as well as the factors influencing it, such as a loyalty to their discipline rather than their institution or academic freedom. Exploring these interrelationships can facilitate our understanding of how academics' learning can be connected with their HEI in order to enhance institutional ESD integration, whether through benefits and rewards or other measures, without compromising academic freedom. Moreover, it will equip future business leaders with the appropriate knowledge and critical thinking to navigate global issues. After all, "our house is on fire" (Thunberg, 2019 [online]) and everyone will have to learn and adapt to global changes and challenges more quickly.



## Appendices



## Appendix A Summary of Declarations in HE

Summary of Declarations in HE adapted from Tilbury (2012)

Year	Declaration/Charter	Organisations
1990	Talloires Declaration	University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF)
1991	Halifax Declaration	Consortium of Canadian Institutions, International Association of Universities (IAU), United Nations University (UNU)
1993	Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development	IAU
1993	Swansea Declaration	Association of Australian Government Universities
1994	COPERNICUS University Charter for Sustainable Development	Association of European Universities (Copernicus Alliance)
2001	Lüneburg Declaration	Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP)
2002	Ubuntu Declaration	UNU, UNESCO, IAU, Third World Academy of Science, African Academy of Sciences and the Science Council of Asia, COPERNICUS-CAMPUS, GHESP, ULSF
2005	Graz Declaration on Committing Universities to Sustainable Development	COPERNICUS CAMPUS, Karl-Franzens University Graz, Technical University Graz, Oikos International, UNESCO
2008	G8 University Summit Sapporo Sustainability Declaration	G8 University Network
2009	World Conference on Higher Education	UNESCO
2009	Turin Declaration on Education and Research for Sustainable and Responsible Development	G8 University Network
2012	Commitment to Sustainable Practices of Higher Education Institutions on the Occasion of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development	UNESCO, UNU, UNEP, The Global Compact, PRME, Academic Impact
2014	Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development	UNESCO, UNEP, International Association of Universities, Japanese Ministry of Education
2015	Incheon Declaration – Education 2030	UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women & UNHCR



## Appendix B UK Sustainability Declarations and Frameworks in Higher Education

Adapted from Mula Pons de Vall (2011)

Year	Declaration/Framework	Organisations
2003	Sustainable Action Plan for Education and Skills	Department of Education and Skills (DfES)
2005	Securing the Future Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy	UK Government
2005	From Here to Sustainability: The Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Sustainable Development	Learning Skills Council (LSC) <sup>55</sup>
2006	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) – A Strategy for Action	Welsh Assembly Government
2008	UK Climate Change Act	UK Government
2008	Greening Spires / Universities and the Green Agenda	Universities United Kingdom (UUK)
2009	A University Leaders' Statement of Intent on Sustainable Development	UUK
2009	Sustainable Development Strategy for Higher Education	Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
2010	Carbon Reduction Target and Strategy for Higher Education in England	HEFCE, UUK, GuildHE
2010	Learning for Change: Scotland's Action Plan for the Second Half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development	Scottish Government
2010	Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland (UCCCs)	The Scottish Government

<sup>55</sup> The Learning Skills Council (LSC) has been closed down in 2010 and replaced by the Skills Funding Agency, which was merged with the Education Funding Agency into the Education and Skills Funding Agency in April 2017. To what degree and if the new agency is involved with SD education projects is not evident on the respective website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>.



## Appendix C Participant Information Sheet

PhD Research Project

### **“A Cross-Case Analysis of Academic Perceptions on ESD Learning and Development Opportunities in UK Business and Management Schools”**

**Researcher:** Angelika Salmen

**Ethics reference:** 13050

**Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form.**

#### **What is the research about?**

The research study is interested in understanding how (non-) academics perceive staff engagement and development opportunities on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) offered at the business/management school they are employed at.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you hold a post at a UK University that is related to SD/ESD engagement across the institution you work at.

#### **The process:**

The research includes interviews with (non-) academics like you who are researching and/or teaching Sustainable Development related subjects/modules at business/management schools in the UK, or who are engaged in the wider integration of SD principles across the institution.

#### **Interview details:**

- In person or via Skype, whichever is more convenient for you
- Interview is audio-recorded, unless agreed otherwise
- Approximate time for the interview is 45-60 minutes including time to clarify outstanding questions and comments

#### **Benefits for participants**

The interview will give you the chance to voice your views on your personal account of ESD engagement at your institution and the support you are given.

## Appendix C

### **Benefits for ESD research**

Understanding (non-) academics' views on engagement and development opportunities, can contribute to existing knowledge in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and provide a better understanding of individuals and their development needs. The outcomes can further help to develop more specific engagement and development initiatives in order to implement ESD more successfully into business/management school curricula in the UK.

### **Are there any risks involved?**

There are no risks involved in taking part in the study, any other than day-to-day risks associated with your job.

### **Will my participation be confidential?**

Any names of individuals and institutions mentioned will be anonymized and interview data will be handled with the utmost care and respect.

All data collected will be password protected and stored in a secure file storage in compliance with the Data Protection Act and the University's Research Data Management Policy.

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, we will ask you to sign a consent form stating that we can use the data provided in the research. If you should change your mind about participation, you have the right to withdraw at any time of the process.

### **Where can I get more information?**

For further information about the study please contact the researcher Ms Angelika Salmen at [as4g11@soton.ac.uk](mailto:as4g11@soton.ac.uk) who will be happy to answer any questions.

If you are interested in the outcome of the research we can also provide you with a report of the findings.

Angelika Salmen

PhD Research Student

University of Southampton

[as4g11@soton.ac.uk](mailto:as4g11@soton.ac.uk)

*In the unlikely case that you have any concerns or complaints about this study, please contact the Head of Research Governance at the University of Southampton (02380 595058, [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)).*

## Appendix D      Participant Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

**Study title:** A Cross-Case Analysis of Academic Perceptions on ESD Learning and Development Opportunities in UK Business and Management Schools

**Researcher name:** Angelika Salmen

**Ethics reference:** 13050

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet (26.11.14 / Version 1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal

### ***Data Protection***

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.*

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....



## Appendix E Semi-Structured Interview Questions

### PhD Research Study

#### ESD staff engagement and development at UK business schools

##### Semi-structured interview overview/questions

1. What is your professional/academic background?
2. Can you please provide a brief overview of your research and teaching activities?

##### SD/ESD background and activities:

1. How did your interest in SD/ESD develop?
2. How are you integrating SD/ESD into your teaching and researching activities?
3. What is the University (and the business school) doing to engage with ESD (i.e. strategic focus, research, teaching, operational tasks, community involvement etc.)?
  - o How does that fit in with your role?
  - o How do you work with different schools/departments?
4. How do the University and the school motivate staff to engage with ESD curricula integration?
5. How do you stay up-to-date and develop your SD knowledge and skills (e.g. networking, workshops, conferences, events etc.)?

##### Training and Development:

1. Have you had any formal SD/ESD training or other development opportunities through the school/University?
  - o If yes, what kind of training?
2. What type of formal training/ professional development in SD/ESD does the school/University offer?
  - o If applicable, what knowledge and skills building does the training entail?
3. Have you taken part in any external training on SD/ESD?
  - o If yes, please give more details on the training, provider etc.
  - o If no, how do you develop/train your SD skills/knowledge?
4. How has the training impacted your teaching and research activities?
  - o Do you think the development opportunities are useful for your teaching/research?

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5. Do you feel adequately supported in integrating SD into the curriculum and furthering your SD knowledge/skills?
  - Why or why not?
6. What can be done to support academic staff engaged with SD/ESD in terms of training needs?

Ethics number: 13050

Researcher name: Angelika Salmen

## Appendix F Coding Cycles

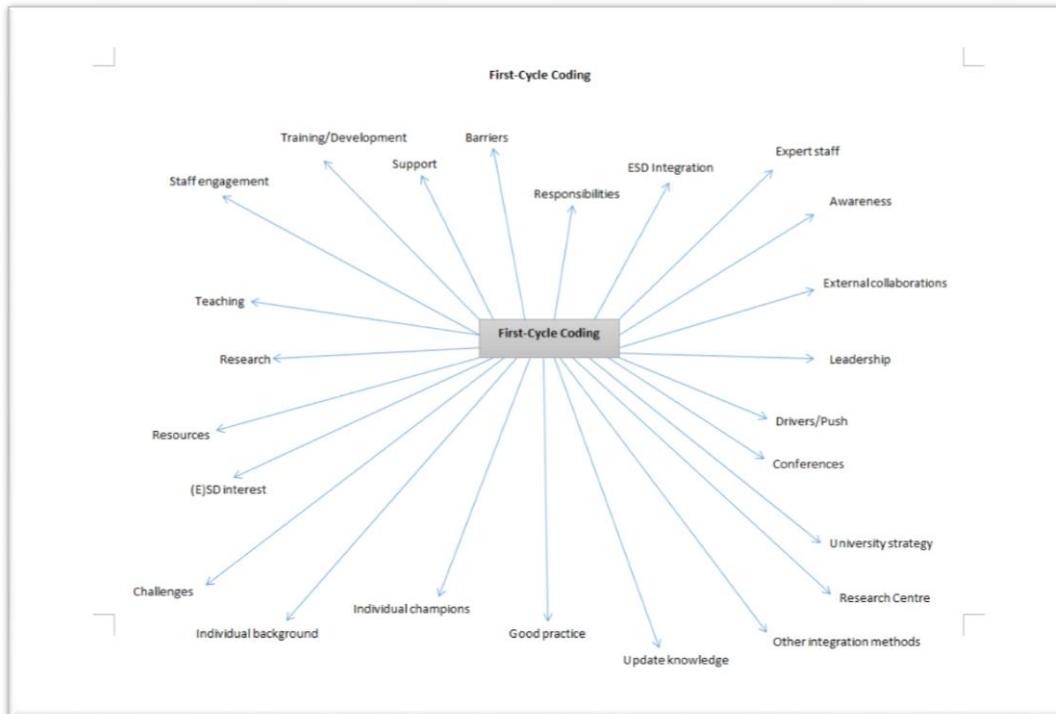


Figure 7.1 First Coding Cycle

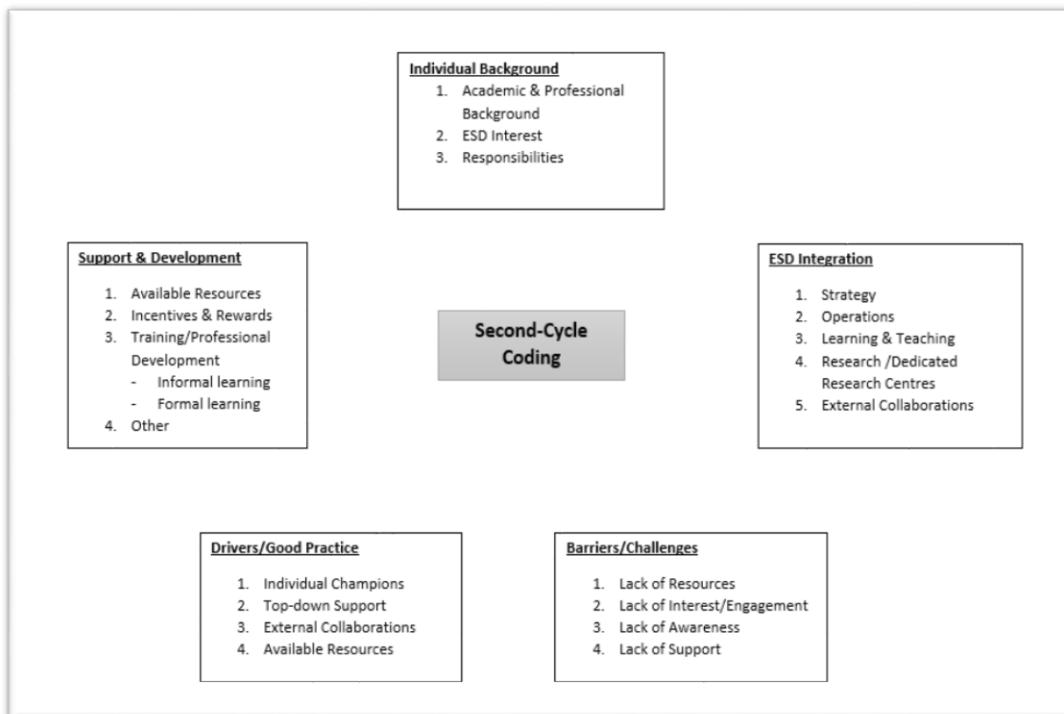


Figure 7.2 Second Coding Cycle

## Appendix F

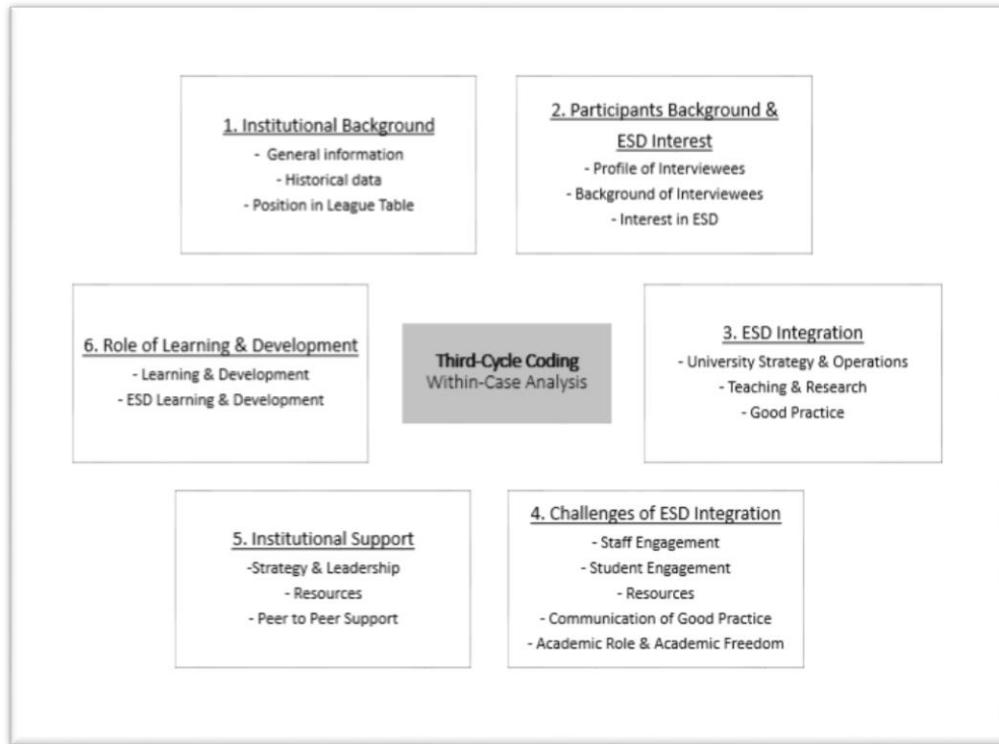


Figure 7.3 Third Stage of Coding - Within Case Analysis

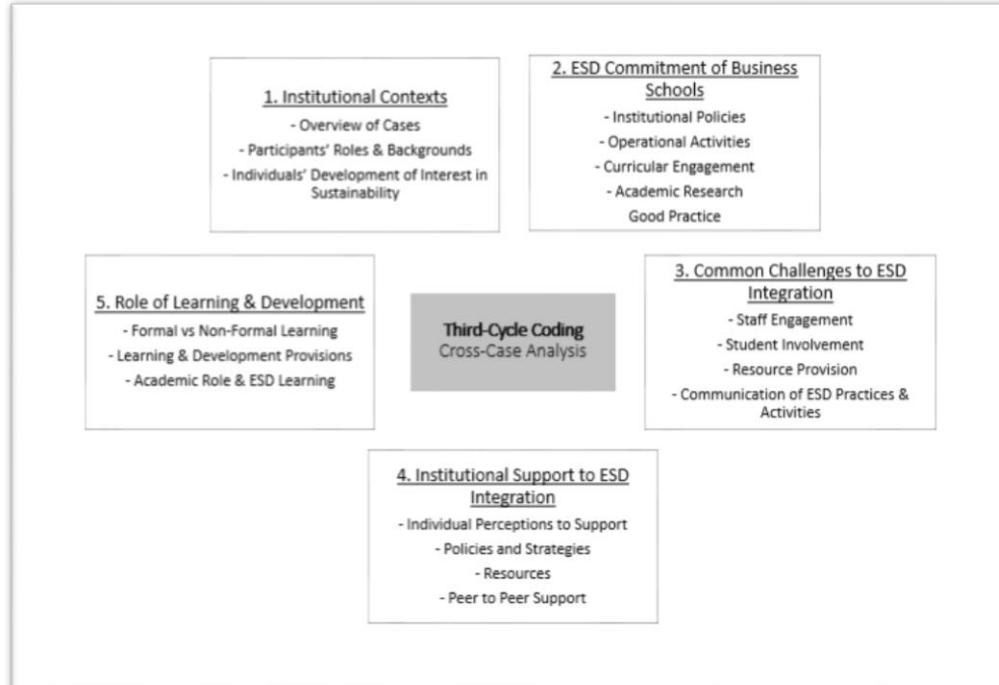


Figure 7.4 Third Stage of Coding - Cross-Case Analysis

## Appendix G Coding Example

Theme: Institutional Support to ESD Integration

The coding process was shaped by the interview questionnaire that organised questions methodically in order to reflect the overall research questions. Although the questionnaire provided a structure, it was ultimately a guide that was open to newly emerging ideas reflected in interviews. However, this methodical approach helped to shape the coding and analysis process as it facilitated reflecting on data early and organising these.

1 <sup>st</sup> Coding Cycle - Identifying broad codes from the interview transcripts	
Interview Extracts	Broad Code/s (see Appendix F)
"Oh the support is there. There is support from the top. At a local level, it's embedded in. I get the support of my department that we can do that and we can encourage students to be green. Institutionally we are just challenged by the challenge of higher education at minute. There is no money in the system" (Howard)	Support, Leadership, Enthusiasts, Resources, Challenges/Barriers
"In terms of the <u>strategic developments</u> yeah absolutely" (Sheldon)	University Strategy, Leadership, Support
"I mean the University are very good and if there's conferences I wanted to go to they would... sponsor that. That's not an issue at all. But that's down to me to make those decisions really... I suppose the issues we have is, there's only me looking after it and... I only do 26 hours" (Penny)	Support, Leadership,
"I'm personally really pleased with... Sheldon being Head of School really. And obviously that will be...that will be fantastic for the... Centre for Sustainability as well. I definitely feel supported at school level. What happens beyond the school level is something that really... it's a bigger agenda that is not driven by us most of the time really" (Lennard)	Support, Leadership
"We're supported in a sense that they sympathize with it. But I don't feel very supported in the sense that they're putting anything in resources in" (Raj)	Support, Leadership, Resources
"I've been working with people who aren't even in the humanities and it's been really liberating for me, because they do things really differently" (Raj)	Support, Enthusiasts, Development

## Appendix G

2 <sup>nd</sup> Coding Cycle – Refining and organising codes	
The second coding cycle refined all broad codes relating to 'support' and organised these into main and sub categories, while rewording some codes and adding new ones to reflect support and develop measures identified in the transcripts.	
Main category	Sub categories
Support & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Available Resources</li> <li>- Incentives &amp; Rewards (newly added)</li> <li>- Training &amp; Professional Development</li> <li>- Other e.g. <code>strategy</code>, <code>leadership</code>, <code>enthusiasts</code></li> </ul>

3 <sup>rd</sup> Coding Cycle - Final refinement of categories to reflect within and cross-case analysis		
Within-Case		Cross-Case
Main theme	Sub themes	One overall theme
Institutional Support	Strategy & Leadership	Institutional Support to ESD Integration
	Resources	
	Peer to Peer Support	

## Appendix H Participant Engagement with SD/ESD

Participants by Case	Research	Teaching	Campus Projects	Community Engagement	Business Collaborations	Learning & Development Provision
<b>Case A Howard</b>	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Case A Lennard</b>	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓
<b>Case A Sheldon</b>	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✗
<b>Case A Raj</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
<b>Case A Penny</b>	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<hr/>						
<b>Case B Chandler</b>	✓	✓	?	?	✗	✗
<b>Case B Ross</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
<b>Case B Monika</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>Case B Rachel</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✗
<b>Case B Joey</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✓
<b>Case B Phoebe</b>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
<hr/>						
<b>Case C Robin</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
<b>Case C Ted</b>	✓	✗	?	?	✓	✗
<b>Case C Lily</b>	✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✓
<b>Case C Barney</b>	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
<b>Case C Marshall</b>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
<hr/>						
✓ = engaged / ✗ = not engaged / ? = unknown						



## Appendix I Individual SD Learning & Development

Participants by Case	How do you stay up-to-date and develop your SD knowledge and skills?						
<b>Case A Howard</b>	Talking and collaborating with employers		HEA training		Sustainability Destination Management		
<b>Case A Lennard</b>	Reading		Networking		Conferences		
<b>Case A Sheldon</b>	Being aware	Reading	Listening	Watching	Research	Good practice	
<b>Case A Raj</b>	Reading		Research		HEA training		
<b>Case A Penny</b>	Conferences		Webinars		Sustainable procurement training		
<b>Case B Chandler</b>	Researching	Learning		Being	Checking all responsibilities		
<b>Case B Ross</b>	Being connected		Writing		Reviewing articles		
<b>Case B Monika</b>	Learning by doing	Independent study		Expanding knowledge	Expanding research	Guest speakers	
<b>Case B Rachel</b>	Conferences	Up-to-date literature		Writing	Experts	Networking	
<b>Case B Joey</b>	Reviewing journal submissions		Writing		Experienced colleagues		
<b>Case B Phoebe</b>	Networking		Sharing best practice		Training courses		
<b>Case C Robin</b>	Academic newsletters	Books	Conferences	Special interest groups	Membership of relevant bodies	Webinars	LinkedIn
<b>Case C Ted</b>	Reading		Presentations		Maintain active connections with business		
<b>Case C Lily</b>	Read journals	Cross-disciplinary work		Co-authorship	Conferences		
<b>Case C Barney<sup>56</sup></b>							
<b>Case C Marshall</b>	Reading		Journal subscriptions		Environmental legislation		

<sup>56</sup> Due to time constraints of the interviewee, details on this question could not be obtained. It appears however, that the participant is affiliated with, and a member of, various high profile HE networks and organisations that require a good understanding of key themes and issues in the HE and particular business school landscape.



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